

'The Return of the Repressed': Uncovering Family Secrets in Zola's Fiction. An Interpretation of Selected Novels

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Declaration of Authorship

I Rita Codsí hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

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Abstract

This project differs from characteristic expectations of Zola's fiction. It takes a different direction in the analysis of selected novels. This study considers that the novelist kept secrets which he obliquely represented in the narratives of the chosen novels. It shows that the secrets are embodied in the *Rougon-Macquart* and other novels. This examination investigates *La Fortune des Rougon*, *La Curée*, *La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret*, *La Bête humaine*, *le Docteur Pascal* as well as *Thérèse Raquin*, *Madeleine Férat* and *Vérité* and demonstrates that these novels belong to the author's sexual anxiety and insecurities. These novels provide a wealth of information and merit to be placed in the realm of psychoanalytical criticism because the language they engage with opens the door to the 'return of the repressed'. This project adopts principally four psychoanalytical theories and shows how they operate in Zola's language: it applies Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok's theory of psychic development, essentially the concept of the phantom, as well as Sigmund Freud's and Jacques Lacan's theories of infantile sexuality.

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Chapter One

This chapter sets out the purpose of the thesis and is divided into five sections: the first section gives a summary of the work and explains the reasons for adopting the theory proposed herein. The second section presents a literary review of Zola's critics. The third section offers a perspective on four psychoanalysts' theories, those of Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan in the examination of the chosen novels. In the fourth section, a close analysis of Zola's language is presented. Finally, the fifth section provides a resume of each chapter and shows how they relate to each other.

Section 1 Presentation and Summary of the Work Proposed

This thesis explores selected novels from Zola's fiction and suggests that their creation is mediated by a repressed sexuality. This theme constitutes the subject matter of this work because it relates to the unconscious and thus influences the ways the novels under examination operate. It examines how the repressed functions in the texts under consideration and proposes that a mystery related to female sexuality pervades the narratives of *La Fortune des Rougon* and *Thérèse Raquin*. It argues that this is silently transmitted in *Madeleine Férat*, *La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret*, *La Curée*, *Nana*, and *La Bête humaine*, and is exposed in *Le Docteur Pascal* and in *Vérité*.¹

La Fortune des Rougon contains a mystery which is transmitted to the rest of the novels under consideration in this work. In *La Fortune des Rougon*, Marie's tombstone and its origin are fundamental to the choice of arguments presented in this work since her death

¹ Emile Zola, *Les Rougon-Macquart*, ed. by Armand Lanoux and Henri Mitterand, 5 vols, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris: Gallimard 1960-1967), I, II, IV, V. Emile Zola, *Thérèse Raquin*, ed. by Robert Abirashed (Paris: Gallimard, 1971). Emile Zola, *Vérité* [1903] (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1993). Emile Zola, *Madeleine Férat* (Montréal: Mémoire du Livre, 1999).

highlights a secret which lies in the catacombs of the Saint-Mittre cemetery and is connected to Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok's theory of the crypt (see section 3).

In *Thérèse Raquin*, while there is a secret in the plot which is related to Camille's murder and to Thérèse's betrayal, there is also another one which is hidden below the surface of the text and is arguably linked to the mystery of Thérèse's origin. Indeed, in this novel the narrator is not precise about Thérèse's character: through the words of the fleeting character, 'Capitaine Degans', Thérèse's father, the narrator simply tells the reader that she was brought from Algeria after her mother died. The narrator does not develop the circumstances as to why Thérèse is brought to her aunt for adoption, although it could be argued that as a single parent Capitaine Degans could not look after Thérèse and so favoured his sister as his daughter's adoptive parent. Nevertheless, the tone of voice of Capitaine Degans is short, sharp, distant and austere in presenting his daughter to his sister: 'Voici une enfant dont tu es la tante [...]. Sa mère est morte [...]. Moi je ne sais qu'en faire. Je te la donne' (*Thérèse Raquin*, p. 39). Capitaine Degans's tone of voice, his brief and furtive appearance in the narrative and his hasty action in disposing of his daughter suggest that he is keeping a secret which he does not wish to reveal. This is supported by the subsequent actions of Madame Raquin who tacitly takes the child, hardly questioning her brother about her niece's origin, only to be given a vague answer by the narrator: 'Elle [Madame Raquin] sut vaguement que la chère petite était née à Oran' (p. 40).

I suggest that the mystery of Marie which pervades *La Fortune des Rougon* and that of Thérèse in *Thérèse Raquin* are silently transmitted in the rest of the texts under consideration (even if the latter novel does not belong to this series) because they (the texts) respond to the causes and effects which originate from the dramas of Adelaïde and Thérèse. Gérard Genette defines this in novel writing as 'transtextualité', or 'tout ce qui met un texte en relation, manifeste ou secrète, avec un autre'.² Genette's definition reinforces Zola's *Rougon-Macquart*

² Gérard Genette, *Palimpsestes: la littérature au second degré* (Paris: Seuil, 1982), p. 7.

hereditary theme, one which is arguably related to female sexuality and is transmitted from novel to novel in the selected texts. I discuss Roy Jay Nelson's theory of causal concept in narratives in section 3 of this chapter because his theory interrelates with the novels' 'transtextualité', since it is due to a specific cause related to sexuality and to trauma that the series hereditary theme functions accordingly.³

Zola's texts have a level of complexity that is not readily apparent to the reader. The novels under consideration present the reader with greater sub-textual issues than they appear to indicate because secrets are skilfully concealed in their narratives. Large parts of this research are devoted to investigating and analysing these elements. Indeed, I argue that Marie's mystery, in *La Fortune des Rougon*, and her origin is related to a secret which is symbolized, in this novel, by the figure of Adelaïde Foucque's 'fêlure': Adelaïde is described by the narrator as having 'un cerveau fêlé comme son père' and, according to him, she committed 'certaines actions que les plus fortes têtes du faubourg ne purent raisonnablement expliquer' (*La Fortune des Rougon*, p. 41). In this passage the narrator presents Adelaïde's actions as 'un mystère quelconque' but does not reveal what the mystery is related to (p. 41). Although the narrator implies that Adelaïde's mystery appears to be insignificant, or unimportant as the adjective 'quelconque' suggests, he remains unwilling to reveal its nature to the reader.

Admittedly, Zola's interest in hereditary degeneracy is linked to Adelaïde's madness and to the period's interest in psychiatry. Matt Reed quotes Robert Nye who identifies the theory as 'a medical model of cultural crisis'.⁴ According to Reed, 'the power of heredity theory after 1850 and the popularity of degeneration as a scientific, medical, and cultural metaphor at the fin de siècle must be understood as part of a more general preoccupation with progress

³ Roy Jay Nelson, *Causality and Narrative in French Fiction: From Zola to Robbe-Grillet* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1990), p. IX.

⁴ Quoted by Matt T. Reed, 'Moral Agency and the Psychiatric Imagination', in *Confronting Modernity in Fin-de-Siècle France: Bodies, Mind and Gender*, ed. by Christopher Forth and Elinor Accampo (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2010), p. 78.

and social change in nineteenth-century France'.⁵ Reed also remarks in the same work, 'the criminal, the madman and the hysteric [...] were considered as hereditary degenerates' (p. 79). He refers to Robert Nye's work on madness in nineteenth-century France which demonstrates how the role of degenerative heredity contributed to the discovery of (sexual) perversion.⁶

Zola's degenerative theory in the *Rougon-Macquart* highlights a preoccupation with a decadent Second Empire, with mental illness, with prostitution and social change and attempts to present a 'medico-moral narrative' (Reed, p. 68). Yet, the narrator's refusal to disclose the origin of Adelaïde's mystery (and that of Marie as we will see in the following chapter) indicates that there is a secret which is hidden in the narratives of the chosen texts; it also points to the narrator's unreliability or his complicity with Adelaïde in keeping a secret since, once again, as he does with Thérèse's origin, he is vague about the nature of Adelaïde's madness and that of Marie's death. Zola's 'scientific' language in this novel does not show or tell the true origin of Adelaïde's 'fêlure', as his naturalist project dictates.⁷ For Zola, however, the term 'fêlure', when applied to women, is arguably related to the mystery that permeates these novels and has a negative connotation as it is linked to feminine sexual transgression and, in turn, is connected to death.

Zola's language deals with 'secrets' as Hannah Thompson also understands.⁸ In her analysis of realist novels, Thompson argues that 'literature has many guilty secrets which are hidden below the surface of the texts'. She maintains that secrets are 'represented in literature of the nineteenth century as taboo'. She shows how this is appropriate in realist novels, and is particular to Zola, to Georges Sand, to Rachilde, and to Victor Hugo's fiction (p. 12). Thompson focuses on the 'silenced' sexuality of Sand and Rachilde, on Zola's topic of 'illness' and diseased bodies in *Lourdes*, and on cruelty, torture and sadism in *Savage Poetry*.

⁵ Reed, 'Moral Agency and the Psychiatric Imagination', p. 78.

⁶ Robert A. Nye, *Crime, Madness and Politics in Modern France: The Medical Concept of National Decline* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984).

⁷ Emile Zola, *Le Roman expérimental* (Paris: Charpentier, 1890).

⁸ Hannah Thompson, *Taboo: Corporeal Secrets in Nineteenth-Century France* (Oxford: Legenda, 2013), pp. 5-12.

She reads Zola's novels, as well as those mentioned in her work, through 'the prism of trauma' which she maintains is hidden below the surface of the texts (p. 12). Her argument revolves around potential secrets which the novels under her examination hold; she argues that they hide 'a secret whilst revealing an act of censorship'. Thompson uses the reflexive potential of the figure of the taboo to 'plot an alternative model of author-reader relation in Zola's own writing practices [in order] to expose the taboo or the unspeakable that sits below the surface of the texts' (p. 12), and focuses on what is hidden, rather than what is shown in the texts.

Whilst Thompson interprets how taboo is used as a means to represent the body in realist fiction, her work compares to some degree to mine insofar as it relates to secrets which are hidden below the surface of Zola's texts. However, unlike Thompson's work, this thesis proposes that secrets, also functioning as taboo in this work, are linked to depraved female sexuality which affects both male protagonists and the narrator. Although Zola's purpose was to attack a corrupt Second Empire by paralleling its decadent behaviour with female sexuality as *Nana* and *La Curée* highlight, I propose that these texts conceal secrets which are buried in the language and are cryptically encoded through a system of signs and signifiers which are in turn rhetorically and semantically inscribed in the language of the texts.

Since the aim of this study is to adopt a psycho-critical reading in conjunction with a deconstructive one, during the course of this examination of Zola's language I shall identify the narrator's voice in these novels with Sigmund Freud's theory of 'the return of the repressed'. In order to avoid any misunderstanding about the role that the narrator of the novels under consideration holds in relation to the author, I give in Section 4.1 a summary of what I believe is the function of the narrator in the selected texts, and highlight to what extent the narrator's voice is related to that of the author; in other words, I show how the narrator's voice is mediated by the author in placing both narrator and author at the same level since I go beyond the fiction in presenting a psychoanalytical interpretation of the novels. Roland Barthes argues that once the author releases his work, he forfeits all claims to it. Barthes also believes that

interpreting texts belongs purely to the interpretation of the linguistic rhetoric of the novels.⁹ He argues that '[a]s soon as a fact is *narrated* no longer with a view to acting directly on reality but intransitively, that is to say, finally outside of any function other than [...] the symbol itself, this disconnection occurs, the voice loses its origin' (p. 383, Barthes's emphasis). Barthes is correct in his distinction between author and narrator. According to him, the narrator is a fictive creation of the author whose figure in the text is no longer viable. Barthes replaces the author's figure with that of 'the scriptor who is born with the text'.¹⁰ Since I analyse the language in relation to the narrator's discourse, I connect this discourse to the 'return of the repressed'. In so doing, I account for the author's influence over his narrator's discourse because it arguably relates to the secret and fits in with the psychoanalytical interpretation of the selected novels (see Section 1.4 for further detail on the role of the narrator).

In respect of the secrets which I propose permeate Zola's language, Jurate Kaminskas regards Zola's realism as 'un réalisme symbolique'.¹¹ Kaminskas cites Claude Seassau who remarks that in Zola 'il n'y a pas de réalisme que l'apparence; il [Zola] dissimule une vérité plus profonde' (p. 99). Kaminskas stresses that Zola is holding secrets; she relates author to character in her examination of *La Joie de vivre*, *La Terre*, and *Pot-Bouille*. In the same analysis, Kaminskas also refers to Jean Borie who observes that Zola's language projects 'une logorrhée libératrice' achieved through writing. Kaminskas shows how phrases which reflect a process of catharsis are present in Zola's language. For example, the verbs 'couler', 'soulager', and 'lâcher', reinforce Borie's argument for the beneficial process of catharsis in writing (Kaminskas, pp. 98-99). Yet, in *Le Roman expérimental* Zola abnegates authorial involvement and sentimentality as this goes against his naturalist principles: he argues for the importance

⁹ Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', in *Art and Interpretation: An Anthology of Readings in Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art*, ed. by Eric Dayton (Peterborough, Ont: Broadview, 1998), (pp. 383-86), p. 383.

¹⁰ Roland Barthes, *Image, Music, Text*, trans. by Stephan Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), 142-48.

¹¹ Jurate Kaminskas, 'Fonction réaliste et fonction symbolique sur les scènes d'accouchement dans quelques romans d'Émile Zola', in *L'Écriture du féminin chez Zola et la fiction naturaliste*, ed. by Anna Gural-Migdal (Bern: Peter Lang, 2003), pp. 98-100.

of impartiality of the author who should not judge and draw conclusions about his characters' actions (p. 15). Hannah Thompson also highlights Zola's ambivalence in his fiction. She remarks that 'realism's claim to objectivity and transparency is undermined by what is hidden in the body of the texts, focusing on the illegible body representation by realist writers'.¹² In Chapter Two, I show that Zola fails to observe his own precepts in presenting Marie's death as a mystery since for him it is essential that the novelist's objective is: 'tout dire, tout voir, tout montrer'.¹³ In *La Joie de vivre*, and in the novels under examination, Zola goes against his own precepts since he hides, as Seassau remarks 'une vérité plus profonde'.¹⁴ My project follows this statement because the novels under examination reflect Zola's control of his authorship as the omniscient narrator, given the ways he manipulates the narratives in order to conceal what is hidden and to be in charge of the lives of his female characters whilst hiding sexual anxieties.

Evidence of interplay which exists between the unconscious and creativity is brought forward by Andrew Brink who shows that 'creativity as biologically programmed adaptation to anxiety is generated in the psychic process and is reinforced by traumatic interpersonal relations'.¹⁵ As discussed, this study adopts both psychoanalytic and deconstructive readings in investigating Zola's language. This choice of critical theories originates not simply from the argument made, but also from the fact that I regard 'literature [as] encompass[ing] all human behaviour and symbolic actions', as Peter Brooks shows whilst relating psychoanalysis to the study of literature.¹⁶ Brooks believes that literature deserves to be placed in the realm of psychoanalytic criticism in order to appreciate the power of the unconscious in relation to literary texts. He also likens the reader and the text to the analyst and the analysand. In citing

¹² Thompson, *Taboo*, p. 5.

¹³ Jurate Kaminskas quotes Emile Zola, in 'Fonction réaliste et fonction symbolique sur les scènes d'accouchement dans quelques romans d'Émile Zola', pp. 98-99.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Andrew Brink, *The Creative Matrix: Anxiety and the Origin of Creativity. The Reshaping of Psychoanalysis from Sigmund Freud to Ernest Becker*, 10 (New York: Peter Lang, 2000), p. 1.

¹⁶ Peter Brooks, 'The Idea of a Psychoanalytic Literary Criticism', *Critical Enquiry*, 13, 2 (1987), 334-48.

Simon Lesser on the relationship that exists between literature and psychoanalysis, Brooks agrees with Lesser that psychoanalysis ‘provides a way to “explore the deepest levels of meaning” of the greatest fiction’.¹⁷

Shoshana Felman also makes a connection between literature and psychoanalytic criticism; she remarks that literature and psychoanalysis are bodies of knowledge that ‘need to maintain an open dialogue’ in their relationship.¹⁸ The task of a literary critic, Felman argues, is to ‘engage in a real dialogue between literature and psychoanalysis, as between two different bodies of language and two different modes of knowledge.’ Felman believes that literature’s function is to serve precisely the desire of psychoanalytical theory and insists that texts work as transference between the author and the reader, who in turn ‘occupies the place of a psychoanalyst’. In representing narrative truth as a linguistic phenomenon, Michael Riffaterre urges the reader ‘not to confuse the unconscious of fiction with the unconscious of the author or of the reader; the latter accessible to psychoanalysis, the former to semanalysis’.¹⁹ It is true that analysing the (human) unconscious belongs to the realm of clinical psychology, yet Riffaterre proposes that ‘there is an unconscious of the text that works like a human unconscious’ (p. 94). He maintains that the ‘unconscious of fiction is related to instances of presuppositions’ in that ‘if the unconscious harbors in symbolic and cryptic forms a truth that we repress at the conscious level, [the] unconscious is therefore assumed to stand in regard to appearances; consequently, whenever the texts seem to hide something, that something is supposed to be true’.²⁰ Felman’s observation that the function of literature is to serve the desire of psychoanalysis corresponds to Riffaterre’s work on fictional truth in that the linguistic phenomenon that is found in narratives is reflected in Zola’s language as a ‘système de connexions multiples qu’on pourrait décrire comme une structure de réseaux

¹⁷ Peter Brooks, *Psychoanalysis and Story Telling* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), p. 15. See also Simon O. Lesser, *Fiction and the Unconscious* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1957), p. 297.

¹⁸ Shoshana Felman, *Literature and Psychoanalysis: ‘The Question of Reading Otherwise’* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), p. 6.

¹⁹ Michael Riffaterre, *Fictional Truth* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), p. 94.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

paragrammatiques' as Julia Kristeva observes.²¹ Kristeva believes that '[T]out texte se construit comme mosaïque de citations, tout texte est absorption et transformation d'un autre texte' (p. 85).²² Substantially psychoanalytically and semantically oriented, this thesis refers to the signifier as a linguistic referent which, it argues, is linked to the unconscious. Indeed, by means of both critical analyses, I merge the unconscious of the texts with the human unconscious because I can extract, through this process, the signifier which, in turn, points me to the mystery that exists in the texts since creative writing often relies on 'presuppositions' (Riffaterre, p. 94).

There are other critics who have also explored different representations of psychic organization in relation to psycho-analytic criticism, for example ego-psychology, object-relations theory, phenomenology, structuralism theory, reader-response criticism, and feminist theories, as demonstrated by Elizabeth Wright in her review of different psychoanalytic approaches.²³ Ruth Anthony El Saffar and Diana de Arma Wilson have linked psychoanalysis with literature.²⁴ In their work, they offer a collection of individual essays which examine selected aspects of Cervantes's fiction in representing a variety of psychoanalytical criticisms: Jacques Lacan, Julia Kristeva, Karl Gustave Jung, and Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, as well as Jacques Derrida, form part of their examination. They argue that their work on psychic development and on the phantom in relation to Cervantes's work 'illustrates how psychoanalysis both helps to explain and is itself explained by the novels as a form [...] [and that] psychoanalytic criticism nonetheless assumes a grounding in the unconscious. Such a grounding moors the reading in matters that [...] makes sense of the otherwise unchecked play of the signifier'. Andrew Bush's understanding of the unconscious in this collection of essays is

²¹ Julia Kristeva, 'Pour une Sémiologie des Paragrammes', in *Sēmēiōtikē: Recherches pour une sémanalyse, Extraits*, 96 (Paris: Seuil, 1969), (pp. 113-146), p. 123.

²² Julia Kristeva, 'Le Mot, le dialogue et le roman', in *Sēmēiōtikē: Recherches pour une sémanalyse, Extraits*, 96 (Paris: Seuil, 1969), (pp. 82-112), p. 85.

²³ For a view of different psychoanalytic approaches to literature, see Elizabeth Wright, *Psychoanalytic Criticism: Theory in Practice* (London and New York: Methuen, 1984).

²⁴ Ruth Anthony El Saffar and Diana de Arma Wilson (eds.), *Quixotic Desire: Psychoanalytic Perspectives on Cervantes* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), pp. 2 and 3.

also relevant to this project: Bush examines how Abraham and Torok's theory of the phantom and their allied concept of the crypt are related to their own clinical experience with melancholia.²⁵ When relating the crypt to melancholia, Bush also makes a connection with Freud's death-drive in *The Pleasure Principle*. I will also make a connection between Abraham and Torok's theory and Freud's work on melancholia and infantile sexuality and argue that they function as a dual unity in Zola's fiction, especially when I relate Freud's theory of infantile sexual development to the examinations of *Thérèse Raquin* and *Madeleine Férat* as well as *La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret* and *La Bête humaine*. Gabriele Rippl and Philipp Schweighauser have shown how traumatic events and situations that have affected some writers are present in their works. They focus on how phantoms linger and haunt some narratives and to what extent the texts discussed in their collection of works face such phantoms.²⁶ The authors intersect a variety of psychic theories, mainly Abraham and Torok's work on transgenerational haunting and Jacques Derrida's *Spectres de Marx*.²⁷ I argue that trauma is transmitted to Serge who inherits Adelaïde's 'détrangement nerveux', and who subsequently manifests sexual anxieties in *La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret* and compare them with those of Jacques in *La Bête humaine*. Consequently, this points to the existence of a phantom, one who permeates the language and is lodged in the unconscious, and is unspeakable, but is silently transmitted from text to text.

Kate Griffiths investigates the presence of feminine ghosts in Zola's novels as metaphors of writing.²⁸ She rightly argues that Zola's writing 'stages the return of a

²⁵ Andrew Bush, 'The Phantom of Montilla', in *Quixotic Desire*, ed. by El Saffar and De Arma Wilson, pp. 269-91.

²⁶ Gabriele Rippl, Philipp Schweighauser, Tiina Kurss and Margit Sutrop (eds.), *Haunted Narratives: Life Writing in an Age of Trauma* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013).

²⁷ Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, *The Shell and the Kernel: Renewal of Psychoanalysis*, trans. by Nicholas Rand (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Jacques Derrida, *Spectres de Marx: L'état de la dette, le travail du deuil et la nouvelle internationale* (Paris: Galilée, 1993). See also Nicholas Rand, *Le Cryptage de la vie des Œuvres: études du secret dans les textes de Flaubert, Benjamin, Stefan George, Edgar Allan Poe, Francis Ponge, Heidegger et Freud* (Paris: Aubier, 1989).

²⁸ Kate Griffiths, 'Scribbling Ghosts: The Textual Spectres and Spectral Texts of Émile Zola', in *Possessions: Essays in French Literature, Cinema and Theory*, ed. by J. Horn and L. Russell-Watts (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2003), pp. 51-65.

dispossessed femininity, in order to query the self-possession of masculinity' (p. 64). In her work, Griffiths observes that 'Zola's novels come to conceive of a truth beyond "truth", of a reality beyond the "reality" that they ostensibly represent' (p. 61). Griffiths' argument in relation to the presence of a female ghost in Zola's novels is pertinent to my evaluation of the phantom in Zola's fiction, because its haunting image helps me to unearth the narrator's anxieties in relation to sexuality. Griffiths connects the ghostly feminine presence to Zola's writing which she argues he employs as a metaphor to describe women. Griffiths also remarks that 'each of [Zola's] novels contains an example of "le fantôme de la femme", a female figure trapped in the margins of scriptural existence' (p. 57). Indeed, through this staging, Zola reflects a trauma related to femininity since it is 'via [the return of a ghostly] femininity, [and] its ink on [the] pages, that masculinity prints the books of its being' (Griffiths, p. 55). I show how Zola re-enacts, through writing, the drama of secrets in using the indelible 'ink' that *his* female ghost leaves behind in the texts under examination. Since each novel contains 'le fantôme de la femme' (Griffiths, p. 57), I explain how it permeates the texts for analysis by attempting to extract the mystery which lies beyond the novels. Indeed, I demonstrate, through the narrator's point of view, how female identity becomes the focus of the narrator's attention since its presence acts out the return of a ghostly femininity. This is characterized principally in the formation of a hereditary female line whose sexual malfunction haunts the novels under examination. Zola creates this type of identity in his female protagonists because female sexuality has contributed to not only to trauma in terms of patriarchal construct in nineteenth-century perceptions of women, but also to personal anxieties. I discuss the link that exists between this contemporary patriarchal construct and the 'private' perceptions of the narrator in Chapter Four, where I examine the ways in which Renée's sexuality is represented in *La Curée* and that of Nana in *Nana*.

When recounting ghosts in literature, Griffiths also refers to Zola's 1892 novel *La Débâcle* and rightly argues that Zola presents the reader in this novel with 'ghost-like' images

in order to represent '[R]eality [which] appears spectral at times'.²⁹ Griffiths's argument is appropriate to the 'spectral' description of Thérèse in the first part of *Thérèse Raquin*. I discuss this important element that exists in the text in Chapter Two, which deals with the haunting aspect of the novel. For Griffiths, however, what seems to be at first a return from beyond the grave is 'subsequently explained and rationalized' because 'authors and artists, in very different areas, use the spectral as a means to evaluate their own artistic act' (pp. 2-4). It is true that Zola evaluates his own artistic act; in making use of the spectral, especially in *La Fortune des Rougon*, *Thérèse Raquin*, and *Le Docteur Pascal*, he explores the ways in which he is haunted by a ghostly femininity. He explores the ways in which a female phantom returns to haunt him because his artistry is connected to the repressed.

In this work on Zola's language I apply the concept of the phantom that originates from a reading of Abraham and Torok's work on the theory of the phantom which emerged when they analysed the behaviour of patients in their clinical practice. In terms of their theory which functions in relation to the unconscious, they configured this concept as a shameful secret silently transmitted to someone else in whom it lodges without their knowledge.³⁰ For them the phantom 'represents a radical orientation of Freudian and post-Freudian theory of psychopathology, since [...] symptoms do not spring from an individual's own life experience, but from someone else's psychic conflicts, trauma and secrets'.³¹ I give further details on Abraham and Torok's theory of the phantom in Section 3 of this chapter, but provide my own interpretation of how the phantom is transmitted in the texts. I explore the theoretical and interpretative implications that the phantom holds in Zola's narratives because I strongly believe that it supports both my analysis of the texts and the arguments presented herein. Although I use Abraham and Torok's theory, I develop it outside their clinical emphasis and context. I speculate on my reading of trauma, since a communication process passes between

²⁹ Kate Griffiths and David Evans (eds.), *Haunting Presences: Ghosts in French Literature and Culture* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2009), pp. 2-4.

³⁰ Abraham and Torok, *L'Écorce et le noyau*, 2nd edn (Paris: Aubier-Flammarion, 1978).

³¹ Abraham and Torok, *The Shell and the Kernel*, p. 168.

my interpretation of the texts and the unconscious of the novels.³² Subsequently, I offer tentative arguments in the reading of the texts and suggest that the narrator's discourse manifests psychic conflicts, trauma, and secrets when sexuality is involved. In other words, I show how the texts offer an opportunity to examine the narrator's unconscious in relation to his discourse. Through this process I demonstrate that an unconscious network of affects (or transference) passes between the narrator, the author of these texts, and the reader (see Section 4.1 for further detail).

This thesis is not scientifically-based, but nevertheless insists on the relationship that exists between Zola's texts and psychoanalysis. I maintain throughout this project an open dialogue between these two bodies of knowledge. Indeed, I concentrate on showing that secrets are encrypted in the language of the texts. I look for something left unsaid in the texts for analysis by uncovering various manifestations of the unconscious in the narrator's discourse since, for Lacan, the unconscious is the discourse of the other and the other is the text, or the narrative discourse. As well as Abraham and Torok's theory of the phantom, I also adopt Freud's and Lacan's theories of infantile sexuality because they relate to language which in turn is linked to the subject. I believe their theories in relation to language and the unconscious are significant to this investigation as I also associate Zola's work to the Freudian oedipal scenario, the interpretation of dreams, the primal scene, the object-relation theory, symptoms-formation (through symbols), and infantile sexuality, as well as to Lacan's imaginary and symbolic concepts. Although Abraham and Torok disagree with Freud's theories of the Oedipus complex, the death drive, penis envy, and the primal scene, they also oppose Lacan's concepts of the imaginary and the symbolic.³³ They accept, however, Freud's theory about infantile sexuality, the unconscious, dream interpretations, and the importance of transference in psychoanalytical situations. With regard to the theory of the phantom that

³² Colin Davis, *Haunted Subjects: Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis and the Return of the Dead* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave, 2007), p. 82.

³³ Nicholas Rand and Maria Torok, *A Question for Freud: The Secret History of Psychoanalysis* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 1997), pp. 5 and 8-10.

'haunts' the novels under consideration in this study, I also guide the reader to Derrida's work on the phantom, especially his work *Spectres de Marx*. In this part, I show how Derrida responds to Abraham and Torok's theory of the phantom, but also highlight the differences that exist between both their theories (see Section 3).

In conclusion to this section, the psychoanalytical reading of the selected novels will show that there is some evidence to suggest that Zola was haunted by secrets. I will present arguments which will be supported by the texts; any biographical details referred to are used to explain what the texts suggest rather than to assert that this is what happened in the novelist's life. The aim of this work is to propose, rather than claim that some passages in the texts under consideration are comparable to events which may have taken place in the novelist's life.

Section 2 A Review of Some of Zola's Critics

Claude Seassau comments that 'Zola considère le réel comme des palimpsestes qu'il faut gratter pour découvrir ce qu'il cache. Ses romans sont à l'image de cette conception, il convient de la gratter comme des palimpsestes pour découvrir ce que cache leur réalisme'.³⁴ I 'scratch' the surface of the language in order to extract, as Kaminskas suggests, 'des éléments qui se trouvent au centre de son [Zola's] imaginaire et qui définissent sa manière particulière'.³⁵ Colette Becker also remarks that 'Le conte et la nouvelle permettent [...] d'exprimer par le biais de la fiction, ce qu'on ne peut pas dire ouvertement'.³⁶ Robert Zeigler finds a relationship between the author of *La Joie de vivre* and Lazare, Zola's male protagonist in this novel.³⁷ He argues that 'biography and creativity should have emerged as the theme of the novel' (p. 205). I also suggest that Zola's creativity can be merged with some events in his

³⁴ Claude Seassau, *Émile Zola: le réalisme symbolique* (Paris: José Corti, 1989), p. 14.

³⁵ Kaminskas, 'Fonction réaliste et fonction symbolique dans les scènes d'accouchement', p. 99.

³⁶ Colette Becker, *Les Apprentissages de Zola, du poète romantique au romancier naturaliste* (Paris: PUF, 1993), p. 132.

³⁷ Robert Zeigler, 'Creativity and the Feminine in *La Joie de vivre*', in *L'Écriture du féminin chez Zola et dans la fiction naturaliste*, ed. by Anna Gural-Migdal (Bern: Peter Lang, 2003), p.205.

life, as Chapters Two, Five, and Six propose when I analyse Marie's mystery in *La Fortune des Rougon*, that of Thérèse in *Thérèse Raquin*, *Madeleine Férat*, *Le Docteur Pascal*, and *Vérité*.

Esther Rashkin also explores the possible relationship between family secrets and the psychoanalysis of narratives.³⁸ She relies, as well, on Abraham and Torok's theory of the phantom of which she gives a comprehensive and noteworthy examination. She studies the haunting effect that a sealed secret may have over subsequent generations of families in literary texts, and adopts Abraham and Torok's method of the phantom especially in their discussion of secrets. Indeed, she investigates the presence of phantoms in given literary texts. To sustain her theory she also highlights rhetorical modes of concealment 'previously unknown to literary criticism, such as symbols and cryptonyms' (p. 4). Rashkin supports her theory with literary examples, but foregrounds the markedly different approaches that Abraham and Torok take in the examination of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* to those of Ernest Jones and Jacques Lacan. It is widely believed that Hamlet reflects the Œdipus complex in relation to his mother and his jealousy towards Claudius. Nevertheless, Rashkin highlights the difference between Freud, Lacan, and Jones's interpretations of Hamlet's reactions in relation to the murder of his father and reflects their inclinations to follow the Œdipus complex and the imaginary and symbolic analyses in relation to Hamlet's behaviour.³⁹ Rashkin's interest lies in the examination of how phantoms can be concealed rhetorically and linguistically within literature, but her attention is focused on how the phantoms' concealed presence is detected and exposed as a driving force behind the actions and discourse of certain characters. She gives an in-depth analysis of Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Sharer*, Auguste de Villiers de L'Isle-Adam's *L'Intersigne*, Honoré de Balzac's *Facino Cane*, Henry James's *The Jolly Corner*, and Edgar Allan Poe's *The Fall of the House of Usher*. In exploring these works of literature, Rashkin shows how the theory of the phantom or the characters' ancestors' secrets are exposed in the characters' discourse with

³⁸ Esther Rashkin, *Family Secrets and the Psychoanalysis of Narrative* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), p. 2.

³⁹ Ibid.

each other and how the secrets affect their discourse. Rashkin points out the visible elements in the characters' narrative that indicate that a secret is present: she identifies traces in highlighting encrypted signs, signifiers which point to the latter, symptoms and codes, as well as stressing words which she believes 'have been pressed, squeezed, inscribed and deformed', words which she transforms and calls 'homophony' in order to reflect a different meaning. For example, in her analysis of *L'Intersigne*, Rashkin deforms the words 'tombe' and 'eau' into 'tombeau' to uncover the 'cryptonym' that is hidden behind these words. In this way, she brings us to the secret which belongs to *L'Intersigne* as *tombe* and *eau* and *tombeau* are, she argues, connected by a concealed sign, the homophone, or the sound of the word, which suggests something other than what it is.⁴⁰ For her all these elements point to an unspeakable family drama (in those novels) which is 'cryptically' inscribed in the characters' discourse as well as in the homophony that some words in the narrative express. Her analysis is relevant to this study since her work explores family secrets in narratives in relation to psychoanalytic and deconstructive criticisms, but is however distinctive from mine insofar as she studies the haunting effects of a secret passed onto characters in narratives which they then expose in their discourse. The difference between my project and that of Rashkin lies in the importance that she gives to characters who expose their secret in their discourse. I concentrate on showing that the secrets which permeate Zola's texts are passed onto his characters without their knowledge: it is the narrator's discourse that unveils them through encrypted linguistic signs.

Anna Gural-Migdal gives an overview of critics who have considered the feminine question in Zola's fiction and in naturalist fiction.⁴¹ She notes that in naturalist fiction, the feminine body is the bearer of ills, of destruction, and of death: this is represented in the female reproductive organ symbolizing both life and death and functioning as 'deux forces [in

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 79.

⁴¹ Anna Gural-Migdal, (ed.), in *L'Écriture du féminin chez Zola et dans la fiction naturaliste* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2003), p. 17.

which] cette coexistence rétablit en fait la relation dialectique dans laquelle se trouvent ces deux Principes Eros et Thanatos' (p. 17).

Naturalist fiction, especially Zola's, relates the feminine to death, because it plays 'un rôle corrupteur [...] dans la société du Second Empire. La femme charogne, le double féminin de la bête humaine' (Gural-Migdal, p. 18). For Gural-Migdal, the contemporary social discourse related (mostly) to women's sexuality, and to their role in society, involved the merging of the medical with the psychological or its 'psychiatrization' (p. 19). This interaction was the result of new scientific theories which resulted from the experimental research on the effect of heredity and the environment by Charles Darwin, Prosper Lucas, and Claude Bernard, followed by Hippolyte Taine's discourse on the 'milieu', and later Zola's understanding and applications of their experimental sciences.⁴² In these essays, Gural-Migdal questions how Zola and the naturalist writers reconcile their experimental doctrines with their obsessions and fantasy regarding the female body. Thompson's study of the unspeakable or the taboo theme in nineteenth-century realist and naturalist fiction will be referred to in Chapter Four to highlight the techniques which Zola and other writers use in order to hide and/or to reconcile their experimental doctrine with the unspeakable subject. I show in this chapter how the 'milieu' functions as a determinant factor in Zola's perceptions and descriptions of women and how their sexuality, as represented by the narrator, is a cause for anxieties. I also remind the reader that although female sexuality was understood to be a taboo subject, Zola took advantage of the literary climate that prevailed during the period regarding the creative imagination and used the subject's 'scandalous' or sensational themes to fascinate his readers and arouse their curiosity through the fictional representation of sexuality.⁴³ As literacy rates rose, reading became a form of entertainment, and popular literature was valued; this gave Zola 'direct

⁴² Hippolyte Taine, *Histoire de la littérature anglaise*, 5 vols (Paris: Hachette, 1873-74), I, XIII-V; Zola, *Le Roman expérimental* (Paris: Charpentier, 1890); Claude Bernard, *Introduction à l'étude de la médecine expérimentale* (Paris: J.-B. Baillière, 1865).

⁴³ For example: Gustave Moreau, *Salomé* (1876); Jules and Edmond de Goncourt, *Germinie Lacerteux* (1865); Gustave Flaubert, *Madame Bovary* (1857), *Salammbô* (1862), and *L'Éducation sentimentale* (1869).

access to the collective heartbeat' as David Coward has shown.⁴⁴ Coward argues that 'sensationalism due to censorship rose as colportage fell' (p. 86). Jonathan Landwer also remarks that *Nana* 'captures [...] the imagination of Zola's readers, many of whom would identify with the situation, personalities and iniquities revealed in the novel'.⁴⁵ In Chapter Four, I consider this important theme and argue that it also contributed to the creation of *La Curée* and *Nana* since these novels have 'sensational' characteristics which would have enticed Zola's readers. Although this theme is identified in Chapter Four, I aim to identify linguistic elements in the novels which point to a repressed sexuality by deconstructing and deciphering encoded messages and signifiers that are concealed in the narrative of selected passages which deal with the representation of female sexuality. Romana Lowe also looks at the fictional female in the works of Cocteau, Baudelaire, and Zola and observes that they represent the feminine as spectacle of writing which for them functions as sacrificial rituals; this method, she argues, allays their creators' anxieties regarding female sexuality.⁴⁶ I look further into Lowe's interpretation in Chapters Four and Five.

The woman question in naturalist writing is furthermore examined by Christopher Forth and Elinor Accampo's collection of essays relating to bodies, minds, and gender in fin-de-siècle France.⁴⁷ In this collection, Karen Offen asks if the woman question is better understood as the man problem.⁴⁸ She shows that throughout the nineteenth century, 'feminist critics grew louder and more significant' (p. 43). She argues that 'feminist criticism [...] focused on

⁴⁴ David Coward, 'Popular Fiction in the Nineteenth-Century', in *The French Novel*, ed. by Timothy Unwin (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 73 and 86.

⁴⁵ Jonathan Landwer, *Les Trois Visionnaires: The Narratives of Balzac, Flaubert and Zola, Masters of Liberal Studies*. (Florida: Rollins College, 2011), 66-67, <<http://www.pdflibrary.org/pdf/les-trois-visionnaires-the-narrative-of-balzac-flaubert.html>> [accessed May 2014]. See also Michael J. Heffernan, 'Literacy and Geographical Mobility in Nineteenth Century Provincial France: Some Evidence from the Département of Ille-et-Villaine', *Local Population Studies* (Spring 1989), 32-42.

⁴⁶ Romana N. Lowe, *The Fictional Female: Sacrificial Rituals and Spectacles of Writing in Baudelaire, Zola, and Cocteau*, *Currents in Comparative Romance Languages and Literature*, 54 (New York: Peter Lang, 1997).

⁴⁷ Christopher Forth and Elinor Accampo (eds.), *Confronting Modernity in Fin-de-Siècle France: Bodies, Minds and Gender* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

⁴⁸ Karen Offen, 'Is the "Woman Question" really the "Man Problem"?' *Confronting Modernity in Fin-de-Siècle France*, pp. 43-44.

women's inadequate education', claiming that women's 'inferiority' was a cultural construct. I explore this argument further when I look at *Vérité* in Chapter Six by relating the Third Republic's perceived opinions of the assumed enfranchisement of women. I will link this argument to that of the anticlerical diatribes that Zola expresses in this novel.⁴⁹

With regard to the psychoanalytic interpretation of Zola's fiction, Jean Borie also relates Zola's *Rougon-Macquart* to the repressed, but does not go deeper in his analysis of the texts to highlight Zola's emotional affects in relation to female sexuality.⁵⁰ Borie focuses on Zola's symbolisms in his fiction in presenting objects which correspond to the functions of the body; he gives as examples L'Alambic in *L'Assommoir* and Le Voreux in *Germinal*; Borie remarks that Zola is holding a secret in highlighting 'le meurtre d'un enfant' in *La Fortune des Rougon* when referring to Marie's tombstone, but questions what Zola's allusion to Adelaïde's 'fêlure' relates to and why Zola does not tell the reader about Marie's origins (pp. 43 and 59). I discuss Borie's arguments in the following chapters, and attempt to offer a theory as to why the secret is related to Marie.

Naomi Schor examines the novelist's theme of heredity in the *Rougon-Macquart* and points the reader to a particular secret that exists in *La Fortune des Rougon* focusing on Marie's tombstone; she interprets it as the murder of children as a result of the Reign of Terror during the French Revolution.⁵¹ I shall develop Schor's interpretation later in Chapter Two, and compare it to my own when I examine *La Fortune des Rougon*.

Antonia Fonyi has also shown that a strong connection exists between Zola's life and his fiction.⁵² Her reading is mainly psychoanalytical as she assesses the oedipal complex in relation to his sexuality and gives examples from some of his earlier work. Similarly, Fonyi's examination revolves around Zola's sexual inhibitions as she studies the novelist's self-analysis

⁴⁹ See Forth and Accampo, *Confronting Modernity in Fin-de-Siècle France*.

⁵⁰ Jean Borie, *Zola et les mythes (ou de la nausée au salut)* (Paris: Du Seuil, 1979), pp. 43 and 59.

⁵¹ Naomi Schor, 'Mythes des origines, origine des mythes: *La Fortune des Rougon*', *Cahiers Naturalistes*, 52-53 (1978-1979), 124.

⁵² Antonia Fonyi, 'La Femme, son propriétaire et le voleur: premières élaborations du scénario oedipien dans l'œuvre d'Émile Zola', *Cahiers Naturalistes*, 75 (2001), 30-38.

whilst composing the novels. She highlights Zola's Œdipus complex in his work. She shows how the novelist's sexual inhibitions transpire in his early poems: in 'Mon Follet' she emphasizes his fear of touch, a sensation which, she argues, aggravates the novelist's sexual anxiety whilst exploring it in his fiction. Although her study revolves around Zola's sexual insecurities she does not search for the source of those insecurities as this study seeks to do in locating the cause of anxiety, although she remarks that Zola's inhibitions seem to originate from a regression which contributed to 'l'assimilation de la sexualité à la destruction, dont l'origine anale est patente chez Zola' (p. 38). Fonyi reads Zola's sexual anxieties in his fiction as evident. I question why there is evidence of such trauma and attempt to present the reader with possible answers.

Marie-Sophie Armstrong also argues that the author's childhood experiences are encoded in the narrative and that his affects are reflected in some passages of certain novels.⁵³ Armstrong examines the structure of the *Rougon-Macquart* and states that the central point of the architecture of the work exists in a different form. That form, she argues, is at the same time present and absent; the centre of each novel pivots around the author, an author who plays a game with his readers in being present and absent at the same time. Armstrong remarks that:

L'architecture des *Rougon-Macquart* n'avait-elle-pas nécessairement besoin d'un centre pour exister en tant qu'œuvre véritablement structurée? Et si ce centre, s'interroge le lecteur, existait-il sous une autre forme ? [...] S'il était à la fois présent et absent, invisible mais, néanmoins identifiable? (p. 7)

Armstrong does not go further in proposing that the centre, around which the work is structured, revolves in turn around the spectral image of the phantom that permeates the texts crucially giving it their structure. Ilona Chessid also looks into Zola's presentation of

⁵³ Marie-Sophie Armstrong, 'Impair et père, ou le roman invisible des *Rougon-Macquart*', *Cahiers Naturalistes*, 80 (2006), 7-19.

female sexuality and identifies female characters who, for Zola, contravene patriarchal rules.⁵⁴ She studies *Le Docteur Pascal* and remarks that the locked cupboard holds the true story of the family's secrets, but does not suggest what the secrets might be; in Chapter Five, I argue that the locked cupboard represents the uterus (see Chapter Five for further detail). Chessid's examination of Zola's sexual insecurities is limited; she does not thoroughly read the signs and the meaning of objects in relation to Zola's unconscious. In turn, I read the narrator's discourse in Zola's language as the representation of a repressed sexuality and link this with the haunting image of a female phantom who exists in the narrator's unconscious and guides the ways the narrative is organized. Indeed, the locked cupboard in *Le Docteur Pascal*, the hole in the wall of the garden in *Le Paradou* in *La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret*, the dreams that Serge experiences in the same work, are signifiers which reflect a hidden and concealed past that stalks the narrator because these recurrent and repetitive themes permeate the texts; they point to a problem that exists in relation to the unconscious and to the Œdipus complex.

Monique Fol also studies *La Bête humaine* in relation to Zola's phantasms.⁵⁵ Fol explores Zola's unconscious and shows how it is reflected in the novel. She examines Zola's frustrations when confronted with conflicting situations. Likewise, she applies to her analysis Freud's studies of the 'fort/da' game which consists of the child repeatedly throwing a wooden reel out of his cot then retrieving it by means of an attached piece of string, accompanying his actions with the interjection 'ooo', interpreted by Freud as 'gone', and 'da' as 'there', for the absence of its mother (Freud used this term when studying his eighteen-month-old grandson playing a game whilst his mother was away). According to Freud, this compulsion to repeat helps master a painful experience.⁵⁶ Fol shows that Freud's theory is relevant to Jacques Lantier's insecurities and psychopathic disorder. For Fol, Zola's repetitive sentences in

⁵⁴ Ilona Chessid, 'Au seuil du désir: le dévoilement de la transgression chez Zola', *Cahiers Naturalistes*, 70 (1996), 7.

⁵⁵ Monique Fol, 'Compulsion répétitive, rites et tabous: Jacques Lantier, Émile Zola dans *La Bête humaine*', *Cahiers Naturalistes*, 65 (1991), 178-79.

⁵⁶ Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle and Other Writings: The Ego and the Id, Inhibition, Symptoms and Anxiety*, trans. by John Reddick (London: Penguin Classics, 2003).

projecting Jacques's mental illness have a psychological resonance regarding the working of Jacques's mind when confronted with his heredity. Fol remarks that these repetitions point to a compulsion to present the reader with an insight into Jacques's diseased mind. For example, Fol takes a few sentences or words which Zola emphasizes: 'subites pertes d'équilibre', 'excès', 'soif toujours renaissante', 'son mal', 'fou', 'cassure', 'fêlure héréditaire', and rightly argues that these phrases highlight the need to pass through a necessary phase in order to reach a more mature one (pp. 178-79). I argue that in *La Bête humaine* Zola's anxieties are reflected in Jacques's behaviour towards women.

Although there are indirect examples of the desire to return to the womb in this novel in a need to murder women, the individuation of Jacques, as well as of Serge, begins to take place in the novels as it, paradoxically, distances itself from the need to return to the womb.⁵⁷ In fact, *La Bête humaine* and *La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret* reflect contradictory (unconscious) messages which will be discussed during their examination, where Freud's theory on the 'fort' and 'da' game is also important to the study of the relationship between the unconscious and creativity in these novels.⁵⁸ I shall discuss Freud's 'Pleasure Principle' theory and equate it to the Eros and Thanatos theme that exists in this novel by linking the above desire to the oedipal complex and to death.

Chantal Bertrand-Jennings's study revolves around the discernment of the novelist's sexual fears and shows how these are manifested in his work, but she does not investigate the origin of such fears.⁵⁹ She highlights however that Zola's interest in female sexuality is crucial to his work as it occupies 'une place de choix parmi l'écrivain, du polémiste, et du sociologue que fut Zola' (p. 8). Although Bertrand-Jennings accepts that woman's sexual passion is the

⁵⁷ For example when Jacques enters then leaves the tunnel in *La Croix de Maufrat* (*La Bête humaine*, in *Les Rougon-Macquart*, ed. by Armand Lanoux and Henri Mitterand, 5 vols) (Paris: Gallimard, 1960-1967), I, 1037-38, 1041-42, and when Serge wishes to reside in *Le Paradou* (*La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret*, in *Les Rougon-Macquart*, IV, 12-13, 1289-1292, 1386).

⁵⁸ Brink, *The Creative Matrix*, p. 1.

⁵⁹ Chantal Bertrand-Jennings, 'L'Éros et la femme chez Zola', *Femmes en littérature*, 3 (Paris: Klincksieck, 1977), 8.

bearer of ills and diseases for Zola, she does not explore the reasons behind such fears, nor does she discuss the patriarchal construct of femininity during Zola's period; she simply demonstrates how Zola's sexual anxiety and inhibitions revolve around the novelist's work.

Odile Hansen, on the other hand, considers Zola's unconscious in so far as she looks at the oedipal complex; she argues that he was the victim of sexual abuse by a Moroccan servant at the age of five.⁶⁰ Hansen's argument may be only exploratory, although it is plausible that such an act would have provoked anxieties in a child and would normally have resulted in psychological problems in later life.⁶¹ Furthermore, we do not know the circumstances of such an incident and we do not have external evidence to support the argument that this event actually occurred. However, since this analysis investigates to what extent the texts under examination belong to the return of the repressed in relation to sexual anxieties, it is therefore useful to explore as well Zéphirin's rape in greater detail in the examination of *Vérité*. In Chapter Six, I consider if Zéphirin's rape works in retrospect of an original sexual anxiety through the close reading of certain passages, but I only draw a tentative conclusion from what is found in the text. Nevertheless, because of a lack of available evidence in respect of this alleged incident, any argument offered on this topic remains speculative.

In interpreting *Germinal* and *L'Œuvre*, Patrick Brady focuses on the psychoanalytical works undertaken by Angus Wilson and Gilles Deleuze.⁶² According to Brady, Wilson focuses on Zola's inner conflicts and believes them to be pathological and neurotic in nature stemming from a violent hostility towards society 'qui le réduisait, lui et sa mère [Emilie Zola] à la solitude et à la misère'. Wilson is correct insofar as Zola encountered poverty; this could have impacted as well in the way in which his narratives shift in relation to social problems as

⁶⁰ Odile Hansen, *La Chute de la femme: l'ascension d'un dieu victimisé dans l'œuvre d'Émile Zola* (New York: Peter Lang, 1997), p. 17.

⁶¹ See Leonard Shengold's interpretation of sexual abuse in *Soul Murder: The Effect of Child Abuse and Deprivation* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1989). See also, Leonard Shengold, "Father, Don't You See I'm Burning?" *Reflections on Sex, Narcissism, Symbolism, and Murder: From Everything to Nothing* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 1991).

⁶² Patrick Brady, *Le Bouc émissaire chez Zola: quatre essais sur 'Germinal' et 'L'Œuvre'* (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1981), pp. 55-74.

L'Assommoir, *Nana*, and *Germinal* highlight.⁶³ Gilles Deleuze makes a connection between 'tares héréditaires', or hereditary flaws, and 'instincts' in *La Bête humaine* and argues that they exist in the central characters of the *Rougon-Macquart*. Zola presents hereditary flaws by imposing them on his characters (mainly women, although he transmits them to Jacques in *La Bête humaine*, but this is also linked to female sexuality, see Chapter Three for more information). Brady points out, furthermore, that there is a connection between the drive to control and the perception of chaos: '[For Zola] it is the perception of chaos that is the source of anxiety that is the source of neurosis that triggers the desire to control' (pp. 184-88). Indeed, Zola controls the reader's response by presenting female sexuality without ambivalence and as devious. In the novels under examination, I show that Zola adopts an auto-erotic style of writing - his *libido dominandi* - to hold on to his survival-oriented drive in relation to the description of female bodies.

Section 3 An Appreciation of Psychoanalysis in Relation to Zola's Fiction

The purpose of this section is to consider three different psychoanalytical theories and show how they frame my analysis of the chosen texts. Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, as well as Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan, are four major psychoanalysts who have worked on the relationship between psychic structures and textual structures or between reading the language of mind and that of the text. It is, therefore, necessary to give a short resume of their theories since they are important for the analysis of the texts.

In Freud's case, his theory on child psychic sexual development is principally found in the Œdipus complex. Freud believes that this concept is universal and traumatic for all individuals; for Freud, a child matures into an adult as a result of conflicting encounters and instinctual sexual drives. The child passes through a series of stages in order to reach sexual maturity, namely: the oral stage (the relationship with the mother becomes libidinous as

⁶³ See Henri Mitterand, *Zola*, 3 vols (Paris: Fayard, 1999-2001), I.

pleasure is associated with the mouth and sucking the breast). The second stage is the anal stage where the child redirects his repressed oral drives to the functions of defecation and retention. The final stage, the phallic, sees the shift of libidinal pleasure to the male genitals as an emerging distinction between the two sexes, differentiated by the lack or presence of the penis which leads to the fear of castration by the father for the child's incestuous desire for the mother. This leads the child to disengage from the mother and to identify with the father.

Lacan's theory of child development differs from Freud's in that he views the Œdipus complex stage as one structuring system called the 'imaginary' (mirror stage) and the 'symbolic'. The imaginary is a pre-linguistic stage in which the child exists 'metaphorically' in relation to his mother: this is the desire to be united with her and the desire to be the object that the mother lacks, above all, the phallus. The child enters the symbolic stage when he recognises the father as a symbol of law prohibiting incest through the name of the father ('le nom/non du père') meaning both the father as name or figure of language and the 'non' as interdiction; the child thereby enters language through the realm of the symbolic world of language. Through the 'non', or the interdiction of the father, the child represses his desires towards the mother. According to Lacan, this in turn is mediated by potentially infinite chains of signifiers linked to each other by a process called 'metonymy', all functioning as a metaphor for the phallus. Drawing on Lacan's theory of psychic development, I also show that the subject's identification with the object is reflected in the image of the mother as well as that of the father: *La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret* and *La Bête humaine* highlight this important element in the writing. By arguing for these mirror identities in Chapter Three, I examine the potential that the phantom theory has over both Serge Mouret and Jacques Lantier. I look at the characters' masculine identifications with that of their (fictive) fathers and examine the negative Œdipus complex that both protagonists express in the novels; I demonstrate that they manifest an incestuous desire towards the image of the mother, yet expose revulsion at that desire. I look at these complex identities because they emphasize the wish to break from

the maternal in order to absorb the masculine law, that of the father. Since I propose that these texts highlight a repressed sexuality, I also argue that this is mediated by creativity which functions as a form of therapy since Zola's language reflects signs where other 'noeud de significations' emerge as 'l'inconscient maintenu comme effet de signifiant est structuré comme un langage'.⁶⁴ In other words, I show that the sign, or the signifier, reflects another one, one which is continuously diffused in the language.

Although Freud's and Lacan's theories on psychic development support my research on the unconscious in relation to Zola's fiction, this project is primarily oriented towards Abraham and Torok's theory of the 'phantom', even though they disagree with some of Freud's and Lacan's theories.⁶⁵ The child, in Abraham and Torok's theory of psychic development, is always in a symbolic relationship with the mother. For those psychoanalysts, 'being' is only possible in the symbolic mode: they propose that human existence is understood in terms of 'individuation' from the maternal. They reject Freud's and Lacan's theories of psychic development as inevitable drama in early psychic maturation and do not accept that a particular event is traumatic to all individuals.⁶⁶ They propose instead that psychic development is non-linear, such as the different stages of an infant's sexual drives or the gradual process from the imaginary to the symbolic. They offer different perspectives on psychic maturation which they believe continues until the child separates from the mother. This process is called 'l'unité duelle', or the dual unity, in which the individual is an undivided entity gradually defined by a constant process of division from the mother, yet exists in a symbolic relationship with her by virtue of the negation of the previous unity by implicitly repeating, 'not the mother, not the absent mother of a prior union of whom traces I bear'.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Jacques Lacan, *Les Quatre Concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse*, Le Séminaire de Jacques Lacan, 11, ed. by Jacques Alain Miller (Paris: Du Seuil, 1973).

⁶⁵ Nicolas Abraham, 'Notes du séminaire sur l'unité duelle et le fantôme', in *L'Écorce et le noyau*, pp. 393-425.

⁶⁶ Rand and Torok, *A Question for Freud*, p. 7.

⁶⁷ Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, *The Wolf Man's Magic Word*, trans. by Nicholas Rand (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. 22.

We are all, in Abraham and Torok's words, in the process of unbinding ourselves from the mother-union that precedes our emergence as individuals, and we all carry within us the vestige of the lost appendage from which we have been severed; in other words, the haunting effects of this lost appendage reflected as the phantom or what Abraham calls the 'crypt' — a 'place inside of the subject in which the lost object is swallowed and preserved'.⁶⁸ Equally influential is their concept of 'cryptonymy', a kind of tomb harbouring phantoms who have not been confronted. This crypt forms parts of an ever-deepening set of defence mechanisms. I show in Chapter Two how Abraham and Torok's understanding of how the crypt functions in psychoanalysis when I analyse the dramatic representation of Marie's tombstone in *La Fortune des Rougon* because it is relevant to the narrator's discourse, as it belongs to the unconscious. Indeed, I argue that the representation of Marie's tombstone holds an 'unspeakable' secret which is silently communicated to the reader through its enigmatic presence.

Abraham and Torok's views of our inherited psychic mechanism have a potential implication on the unconscious since they expose our ancestors' 'saga'. Abraham and Torok propose that this can occur in patients who show symptoms of a shameful and unspeakable experience which is kept secret and barred from consciousness, but is transmitted through a pathogenic process of symptom formation. In their view, this is traced to a secret kept by a family member in an earlier generation. Their concept of the phantom that carries family secrets is crucial to my project as it presents a new viewpoint on the theory of the phantom in Zola's texts; in other words, secrets which are arguably present in Zola's language expose a shameful past traced through the haunting effects that the novels impart. Although Abraham and Torok believe that the experience is kept secret and is barred from consciousness, they nonetheless also believe that 'undisclosed trauma of previous generations might disturb the lives of their descendants'. I show how undisclosed trauma affects the lives of Adelaïde's

⁶⁸ Ibid.

descendants in that her unspeakable secret (as Chapter Two highlights) is silently transmitted to her female descendants.

The presence of secrets in the texts begins in *La Fortune des Rougon* and ends in *Vérité*. In *La Fortune des Rougon*, the narrator's description and allusions to Marie's death and her burial point the reader to a mystery that envelops this narrative. I question the need for Marie's incorporation in this novel since her 'presence' becomes redundant in the rest of the novel; I explain that it is purposely placed at the opening of this novel because it has a 'rectilinear causality' in the narratives of the subsequent texts under examination. In other words, Marie's mystery or her spectral presence is silently transmitted in the following novels because it originates from the 'fêlure' of Adelaïde who in turn holds Marie's secret. This is then passed on to Adelaïde's female descendants, as well as to Renée in *La Curée* (in Chapter Four, I show why Renée also inherits Adelaïde's madness since she is only related to the Rougon family through marriage to Saccard). Roy Jay Nelson calls this a 'causal chain in textualization' because 'causation arises most basically in stories from readerly [or readers'] perceptions' (p. IX). He evokes the notion of 'causal function in narratives' and argues that causes are present in the discourse of the text, in the unavoidable implications of language, not in the event of the story itself. There exists a chain of sequences or causes in the *Rougon-Macquart* novels that have affected the way narratives are presented in the texts. Nelson adapts Gérard Genette's tiered model of narration: history, discourse, and narration, or 'histoire, narration et récit'.⁶⁹ I show how the reader's perception contributes to the arguments presented herein: I demonstrate that Marie's addition functions as an unavoidable 'récit' in *La Fortune des Rougon* because her spectral presence is needed to influence the history of the subsequent family's misfortunes since it relates to the causes which lie behind the narrator's discourse on Marie's death. I will discuss Genette's work in further detail when I examine Marie's narrative in *La*

⁶⁹ Gérard Genette, *Nouveau discours du récit* (Paris: Seuil, 1983).

Fortune des Rougon and connect it to the narrative of Thérèse in *Thérèse Raquin* and the subsequent novels.

For Abraham and Torok, the secret passed from one family generation to another is unspeakable because it is too shameful to be spoken, and, for Zola Marie's mystery is too reprehensible to be 'narrated' since her story is taboo and cannot be uttered. This is exemplified by the mystery that revolves around her death. Zola's language, in narrating the passage about Marie, and in describing her tomb, corresponds to Derrida's understanding of secret: for Derrida, it is unspeakable because 'the secret cannot be articulated in the language where it is buried' (the text). Marie's secret is buried in the crypt/text and thus cannot be articulated because it belongs to someone else. Derrida's interest in the secret is the *secrecy*, or the 'structural enigma which inaugurates the scene of writing' as Jodey Castricano observes.⁷⁰ In Chapter Two I analyse Marie's structural enigma when the narrator introduces her crypt to the reader at the beginning of the novel. Unlike Abraham, Derrida makes the spectre speak: he asks the reader to 'listen to the spectre', to 'speak with the spectre', most of all to let the 'spectre speak'. Derrida continues in observing that the 'scholar of the future, tomorrow's intellectual, should learn to live by learning not to make conversation with the ghost, but to converse with him [...]. Spectres are always there, even if they don't exist, [...] even if they are not'. For Derrida, the spectre's secret is a 'productive opening of meaning rather than determinant content to be uncovered. It is the element of haunting in which deconstruction finds its place. Spectrality is inseparable from deconstruction. It is the element of haunting'.⁷¹ As Derrida suggests, I speak with Zola's phantom (in terms of what the narrator's discourse suggests in the novels), and as Hélène Cixous did with Derrida's work after

⁷⁰ Jodey Castricano, *Cryptomimesis: The Gothic and Jacques Derrida's Ghost Writing* (Montreal and Kingston-London-Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), p. 30.

⁷¹ Jacques Derrida, *Spectres de Marx*, quoted by Colin Davis in, *Haunted Subjects*, pp. 10, 13, and 79.

his death, I 'surligne' using Frédéric Regard's expression.⁷² In other words, I use Cixous's mode of 'réiteration' in order to 'summon' the spectre by deciphering and deconstructing (as well as reconstructing) secrets which permeate the texts. If for Abraham and Torok the secret is unspeakable, and for Derrida it is to be confronted and to be allowed to speak, in this project I let Zola's phantom speak to me; in other words, I deconstruct the secrets which are 'shameful and unspeakable' during the analyses of the novels by reading beyond the fiction. Indeed, Zola opens the first novel of the *Rougon-Macquart* with a family crypt which contains the remains of an innocent child, Marie, and lets her phantom 'speak' through the voice of the narrator. Through him, Zola projects a mystery which belongs to the Rougon-Macquart family but does not disclose it. Zola subsequently represents this as a hereditary flaw which originates from sexuality and largely affects female characters, as well as impacting on Serge in *La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret* and Jacques in *La Bête humaine* (see Chapter 3).

This approach to the analysis of the texts does not mean that I disregard Freud's and Lacan's theories of psychic development in relation to language; on the contrary, I combine the three theories and, as I proceed with the analysis of the texts, highlight both their differences and their connections. Since I believe that Zola's texts are charged with key elements which hold a secret, I argue that they (the texts) exemplify the above-mentioned theories. These are the grounds for adopting such an interpretation for the reading of the selected texts as I engage in a dialogue between the body of language and the body of knowledge, and thus suggest one way of linking the human unconscious (that of the author of these novels) to that of the unconscious of the texts (the narrator's discourse).⁷³ The psychoanalytic and deconstructive interpretations of these novels determine how my analysis takes shape.

⁷² For Hélène Cixous's work on her *Portrait de Jacques Derrida en jeune saint juif*, see Frédéric Regard, "Réitération", or the Haunting of Style in the *Portrait de Jacques Derrida* by Hélène Cixous', in *Haunting Presences*, trans. by Suzanne Dow, ed. by Griffiths and Evans, pp. 130-137 (p. 134).

⁷³ Riffaterre, *Fictional Truth*, p. 94.

Section 4 The Function of the Unconscious, or the Dual Unity

Trauma does not have to be necessarily sexual, but in the case of Zola's language it is sexual and conflicting since it relates to the perception of femininity. For Zola, female sexuality is important, in that it belongs to his inner affects and functions as a spectral presence which haunts the narratives. It is also connected to other outside influences which contributed to the vilification of femininity, originating from contemporary perceptions in the social and medical discourses of female sexuality in nineteenth-century France.

Zola's fiction is both cathartic and documentary. It is documentary, because through the narrator the reader is given a representation of the nineteenth century 'decadent' period in which Zola lived. It is cathartic because this sensation occurs through the process of writing. In showing that 'creative adaptation to intolerable anxiety is possible for anyone, but is most graphically evident in artists', Brink presents the reader with John Bowlby's theory of anxious attachment. Bowlby insists that 'creativity uses symbolic means to locate and penetrate unconscious anxieties about attachment'.⁷⁴

Martine Delfos also links creativity to traumatic experiences, but for her, it is the loss - the death principally of a parent - that affects how creativity is engendered.⁷⁵ She remarks that: 'La perte prématurée d'un parent peut donc avoir une influence créatrice sur l'enfant. Pour pouvoir évaluer l'importance de la perte prématurée pour les écrivains, il faut comprendre les conséquences psychiques d'une telle perte' (p. 45). She believes that creativity is borne out of traumatic experiences that happened during the child's psychic development. She stresses the particular frequency of writers who have lost one or two parents between those ages. Zola's loss of his father at the age of seven comprises part of her theory. In addition, she explores the role of heredity in the *Rougon-Macquart* novels and connects it to his experience of losing his father. Her theory is convincing as Zola's fiction is connected to

⁷⁴ John Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss*, 3 vols (London: Hogarth Press, 1969), I, 280.

⁷⁵ Martine Delfos, *Le Parent insaisissable et l'urgence d'écrire*, Études de langue et littérature françaises publiées sous la direction de Keith Busby (Amsterdam, and Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 2000), p. 45.

anxiety in terms of parental loss as demonstrated in her assessment of Zola's *Contes à Ninon*. Delfos rightly believes that '[L]'orphelin est un thème important dans les contes et nouvelles'.⁷⁶

In my reading of the texts, I consider that trauma is a catalyst for the development of Zola's fiction. We should remind ourselves that Zola buries a secret in the narrative of *La Fortune des Rougon* through the dramatic representation of Marie's tombstone and through Thérèse's mysterious origins in *Thérèse Raquin*. Zola exposes it in *Le Docteur Pascal*, but lets Félicité destroy Pascal's documents. In *Vérité* Zola 'revives' from the ashes Pascal's burned documents because he deals, in this last novel, with the unspeakable secret, one which refers to the murder of children as Chapters Two and Six emphasize. Hannah Thompson's arguments that Zola 'uses personal trauma to symbolize national trauma [in relating the novel to] a veiled account of the Dreyfus Affair' in *Vérité* will be examined in this last chapter.⁷⁷

4.1 The Role of the Narrator

Riffaterre's observations that narrative truth functions as linguistic phenomenon is relevant to this study in that it analyses the unconscious as reflected in the language through the linguistic phenomenon. It subsequently relates it to the narrator's unconscious since his discourse is influenced by the narrative authority.⁷⁸ We have seen in Section 1 that for Barthes it is the language (of the texts) which 'speaks' not the author; indeed, for Barthes 'the author is supposed to feed the book', he is 'always conceived as the past of his own book'.⁷⁹ For my part, the author represents the invisible 'scriptor' who *feeds* the (selected) texts with sexual anxieties and insecurities related to female sexuality; this fact reinforces therefore the argument made for the return of the repressed since the very act of writing becomes a

⁷⁶ Ibid., pp. 295-323.

⁷⁷ Thompson, *Taboo*, p. 12.

⁷⁸ Riffaterre, *Fictional Truth*, p. 94.

⁷⁹ Roland Barthes, *The Rustle of Language*, trans. by Richard Howard (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 1989), p. 52

gratification of unfulfilled libidinal desires for Zola. The language that is expressed in these texts becomes an outlet for sexual frustrations as exemplified in the pornographic content, as well as in the sadistic and perverted language that the narrative unveils in some novels, such as *Nana* and *La Curée*. These novels function as a mechanism to channel, via the intermediary role of the narrator's discourse, sexual inhibitions since a relationship arguably exists between the writer of these novels and the narrator. I discuss below the roles that the narrator and the author hold in the novels. Before doing so, I wish to highlight some critics who distinguish between narrator and author in fiction.

Jonathan Landwer examines Balzac's, Flaubert's, and Zola's narratives and shows how these writers manipulate their creations through effective narrative means to convey action to the characters.⁸⁰ In his study, Landwer distinguishes between author and narrator. For him, the role of the narrator functions as a 'third person reflector' (p. 66). He argues that 'Zola shifts his objectivity during his novelistic series of the *Rougon-Macquart* and observes that *L'Assommoir's* narrative contains an 'impassionate narrator' who reflects, through a *discours indirect libre*, on the causes and effects which befall his characters. In *Nana*, Zola is the implied author according to Landwer, in that the novelist 'sharpens his axe on the wheel of human weakness as *Nana* delves her contemptuous blow to *La Faloise*' (sic). He argues that 'Zola is not drawing on sentimentality [...]; he is showing his prowess as a practitioner of human psychology, challenging the reader's sense of morality'.⁸¹ It is true that the narrators of *Son Excellence Eugène Rougon* (1876), *L'Assommoir* (1877), *Germinal* (1885), *Le Ventre de Paris* (1873), *Pot-Bouille* (1882), *L'Argent* (1891), *Au Bonheur des Dames* (1883), and *La Débâcle* (1892) are significantly different from the ones in the texts under consideration, because the above mentioned novels are narrated in a 'documentary style' charting contemporary political and social events that occurred during the Second Empire and the Third Republic and thus adhere to a strict impartiality. I show that *Nana* and *La Curée* are also critiques of a corrupt

⁸⁰ Landwer, *Les Trois Visionnaires*, pp. 66-67.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 67-68.

Second Empire society; yet, they do not show a strict impartiality when the representation of female sexuality becomes an issue (see Chapter Four). For Anton Chekhov ‘the writer must be as objective as a chemist; he must abandon the subjective line; he must show that [...] evil passions are as inherent in life as good ones’.⁸² In practice, the author is impersonal and detached from his story since he ‘must not judge [...] his characters and their conversations, but be only an unbiased witness’ as Wayne Booth also remarks.⁸³ Booth refers to the writer as the one representing the ‘official scribe, so to speak, of the narrative [...], trying on masks, on assuming roles for the writing’s sake’. To make a distinction between narrator and author is to understand that the implied author is a ‘virtual author’ as Landwer further remarks (p. 65). Caroline Andrée Diebold believes that in Zola’s fiction, the author employs narrative objectivity and that his protagonists ‘évolu [ent] sans que le narrateur ne porte de jugements’.⁸⁴ Since he is the invention of the writer, the omniscient narrator is ‘closely identified with the status and form of the nineteenth century novel.’ Paul Dawson observes that the ‘omniscient narrator was the voice of the novel’s cultural authority’.⁸⁵ For him, the ‘Victorian narrator is immanent rather than transcendent’ (p. 94).

In the novels under examination, the author is not ‘as objective as a chemist’ as Chekhov understood. Zola or the narrator of those texts does not show that evil passions are as inherent in life as good ones – although this happens in *Vérité* (see Chapter Six). In the *Rougon-Macquart*, Zola subjugates and contains his female characters to follow his patriarchal point of view of expected female (sexual) behaviour; yet, he incorporates different narrative styles and introduces popular language into his works; this is exemplified by the different

⁸² Anton Chekhov quoted by Landwer in *Les Trois Visionnaires*, pp. 68-69. See also, Chekhov, ‘Letters of Anton Chekhov 1876-1904’, trans. by Constance Garnett, Project Gutenberg, letter to M. V. Kiselyov (14 January 1887), <www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/6408/pg6408.txt> [accessed October 2014].

⁸³ Wayne C. Booth, quoted by Landwer, in *Les Trois Visionnaires* pp. 68-71. See also, Wayne, C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983).

⁸⁴ Caroline Andrée Diebold, *La Marginalisation narrative de la parole féminine populaire dans “Nana” d’Émile Zola*, Masters Abstracts International (Ottawa: Université d’Ottawa, 2009), volume: 41-05, (1) <<http://www.ruor.uottawa.ca/bitstream/10393/8938/1/MQ76520.PDF>> [accessed June 2014]

⁸⁵ Paul Dawson, ‘Real Authors and Real Readers: Omniscient Narration and a Discursive Approach to the Communication Model’, *Journal of Narrative Theory*, vol. 42, 1 (Spring 2012), 94.

narrative voices which are used in *L'Assommoir*. Linda Beane Katner shows how through a *style indirect libre*, Zola 'attains his goal in depicting a realist Second Empire society' in this novel. She also argues that through this literary technique, 'Zola's characters are able to intimately reveal their thoughts'.⁸⁶ For Beane Katner, 'Zola privileges female group discourse in the *Rougon-Macquart*, giving it power and force' (p. 56). Zola privileges working-class female discourse, because through the *style indirect libre*, the narrator's discourse in this novel 'est pris en compte dans la mesure où il met en scène tout leurs discours, non pas d'une façon objective, mais avec force de gloses péjoratives qui font de la figure féminine un bouc émissaire'.⁸⁷ This argument is appropriate to the critical readings of *La Curée* and *Nana* in that Renée and Nana are arguably used as scapegoats in order to fulfil an inhibited sexuality.

In terms of this interpretation of the novels in this study, the narrator is not in conflict with the author; both conceal secrets and refuse to 'tell' and 'show'. Since this work is founded on a psychoanalytic interpretation of Zola's language, I demonstrate that narrator and author are complicit in the texts under examination in that Zola's narrator functions only as 'une voix dans le texte', a voice in the text.⁸⁸ Indeed, I show that Zola's narrator, being an invention of the writer, becomes the 'implied author' because, in this case, he reflects the author's thoughts, his fears and his anxieties in relation to sexuality, and has authority to do so. Thus, Zola's narrator, responding to an authorial request, is, in these novels, omniscient, immanent, and intrusive with regard to his female protagonists' fate, and reflects his own authority in displaying his knowledge of his fictional characters. Furthermore, as the intermediary between the author's creativity and linguistic expression, the narrator becomes the spokesman of the author's inhibited desires.

⁸⁶ Linda Beane Katner, 'Zola's Female Discourse', in *L'Écriture du féminin chez Zola et dans la fiction naturaliste*, ed. by Anna Gural-Migdal (Bern: Peter Lang, 2003), pp. 56 and 61.

⁸⁷ Diebold, *La Marginalisation narrative de la parole féminine*.

⁸⁸ Genette, *Nouveau récit du discours*, p. 45.

Peter Brooks maintains that the narrative process works as the messenger of the narrator's unconscious by mapping out the intermediary region.⁸⁹ Since I go beyond the fictional texts in suggesting that there might be a link that exists in these novels with trauma, I term Zola's intermediary region the narrator's voice, one which floats alongside the language as a dual unity. In so doing, I simultaneously decipher affects and show that these are concealed as cryptograms and symbols. I shall borrow a Freudian term and call these encoded signs a set of *free associations* during my examination of the novels since by decoding and analysing them I penetrate the narrator's 'uncensored expressions of thoughts and feelings'.⁹⁰ In other words, there are free associations that take place in the language between creativity and the unconscious in the form of encoded signs which emerge as signifiers. Consequently the narrator returns to a sexual infantile stage: the oral, the anal, and the phallic when confronted with female sexuality in order to gratify inhibited sexual impulses. This argument is especially relevant to the analyses of *Thérèse Raquin*, *Madeleine Férat*, *La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret*, and *La Bête humaine*. I group each stage into its respective role in different novels and show how it operates in relation to the unconscious. I shall characterize this sadistic fantasy as the narrator's auto-erotic and narcissistic phase since, in the case of Zola, writing is used as a symbolic outlet for anxieties.⁹¹ As a conclusion to the above interpretation of the functions of the narrator and of the author in these novels, this thesis introduces the narrator as the implied or virtual author (who represents Zola) each time an argument related to sexuality and to the unconscious is developed during the examination of the selected texts.

⁸⁹ Brooks, 'The Idea of a Psychoanalytical Criticism'.

⁹⁰ Glen O. Gabbard and others (eds.), *Oxford Textbook of Psychotherapy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 4, 10, 446.

⁹¹ Infantile sexuality is for Freud auto-erotic, see Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle and Other Writings: The Ego and the Id, Inhibition, Symptoms and Anxiety*. See also Brink, *The Creative Matrix*.

Section 5 Organization of the Chapters

I show below how the chapters are organized. I start by exploring three novels in Chapter Two, in particular two which are not part of the *Rougon-Macquart* series: *Thérèse Raquin* and *Madeleine Férat*. They are, however, related to it because they explore the realm of the unconscious and are expositions of Abraham and Torok's theory of the phantom since they stage the return of a 'dispossessed femininity'.⁹² Although *Thérèse Raquin* and *Madeleine Férat* come before *La Fortune des Rougon*, the latter needs to be analysed first as it is the one that leads the reader to the founding secrets. I look at *La Fortune des Rougon* and show how the theme of heredity predates the series. In short, I relate *La Fortune des Rougon* to *Thérèse Raquin* and subsequently to *Madeleine Férat* because the secrets are manifested in these novels and because they offer a reading of the narrator's unconscious as they hold important keys to unlock the secrets. I will reiterate Hannah Thompson's work on taboo in realist novels and show how *La Fortune des Rougon* and *Thérèse Raquin* hold secrets. It is important that *La Fortune des Rougon* is explored if only for the cryptic system of narration that Zola adopts in certain passages of the novel, specifically in those relating to Marie. I will, however, focus on those that need examining, but will not examine the whole novel because I believe that the story of Plassans and its political intrigues in this novel and the reference to Adelaïde Foucque's secret are not arguably related.

Chapter Two is divided into two main parts: in Part One I reconsider *La Fortune des Rougon* as an early work which reflects an anasemia and relate it to *Thérèse Raquin*. I subsequently link the novel to the secret which I argue relates to the death of a child: in this part, I show that Adelaïde Foucque, the originator of the hereditary flaw, embodies a secret which is transmitted from one family generation to the other, to Thérèse and Madeleine, and affects the narrator of these novels. I point out that the selected passages in those narratives

⁹² See note 29.

hold secrets which the narrator does not wish to disclose. Indeed, Marie's 'spectre' returns to haunt the narrator in the novels since the object of her 'return' is to collect a debt which is related to Adelaïde's sexuality and thus 'disturbs the lives of [her] descendants'.⁹³ I go beyond what the narrative presently offers because I read against the grain of what is presented. During the examination of Marie's tombstone and that of 'Le Passage du Pont-Neuf' in *Thérèse Raquin*, I show how these novels project a textual unconscious, one which Riffaterre argues for.⁹⁴ I put forward my 'point of view' over the narrator's commentaries since a relationship exists between my reading of the texts and the narrator's unconscious. I highlight the secret and represent it in Miette; I give the reasons for this choice of representation when I argue that Miette's character embodies that of Marie because for the reader Marie is a mystery; her omission from, or Zola's refusal to develop her story in the following plot is questionable. By speculating on who Marie is, in terms of her origins and death, and by presenting a tentative argument as a result of that speculation, I show that Marie's story becomes unavoidable in this part of the novel since it sets in motion a chain of sequences or causes that are moral and affect the female protagonists, as well as affecting the narrator of this novel.⁹⁵

In Part Two of this chapter, I make use of the Œdipus complex and jealousy and resentment towards other 'intruders' as one of the main factors which governs the texts of *Thérèse Raquin* and *Madeleine Féral*. In this part, it is important to investigate the narrator's tone of voice as well as his thoughts on the characters. I foreground the narrator's involvement with his characters and demonstrate how he manipulates and controls them in order to fulfil egotistic and perverted desires. I emphasize the narrator's anxiety and despondency in *Madeleine Féral* as it particularly relates to emotional insecurities regarding the maternal. In terms of psychoanalytical reading, the oral stage is operative in these novels; I

⁹³ Nicolas Abraham, *Le Verbier de l'homme aux loups* (Paris: Flammarion, 1976).

⁹⁴ Riffaterre, *Fictional Truth*, p. 94.

⁹⁵ Nelson, *Causality and Narrative in French Fiction*.

show how this works. This will lead me to discuss the insecure and immature or the oral phase, although they seem incompatible with Abraham and Torok's theory of the phantom.

In Chapter Three I also compartmentalise the writing and composition of *La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret* and *La Bête humaine* in this infantile psychic development stage. The oral and anal phases are present in these novels as the language of the novels shows a strong attachment to the object of desire — the mother — enjoying by this attachment a pleasure, related to sex, through dreams. In this chapter, I highlight the process of the oedipal phase that is present in the language of the texts.

Furthermore, I investigate Marthe's character and show that her religious indoctrination by l'Abbé Faujas has an impact on Serge's sexual and psychic development. Although I highlight Zola's anticlericalism, I also demonstrate that the secret which belonged to Adelaïde is silently transmitted to Serge as well as to Jacques in *La Bête humaine*; this is projected through a manifestation, in both characters, of psychic disorders related to infantile sexual development. I argue that these novels result from the effect of the Œdipus complex; I incorporate this theme with the theory of the phantom in that both theories function as a dual unity in these novels. Indeed, I explore the significance of dreams which *La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret* and *La Bête humaine* present. This chapter is also divided into two parts. Firstly, I show that these novels project a masculine identity crisis which affects the central male characters. This will be illustrated as a reflection of inhibited, yet forbidden desires. The first part examines the presence of dreams and illustrates their formation to the extent that they represent fantasies of the unconscious through gratifications of libidinal desires. The second part of this chapter argues for the individuation process which both Serge and Jacques eventually reach; this is reflected in the protagonists' complete detachment from their milieu, albeit enjoying by

this a sexual *jouissance* defined, however, by the narrator's perverse, misogynist, and sadomasochistic diatribes against women.⁹⁶

Along with the theory of the dual unity, I also show how the middle, or anal phase functions, because I believe that the dual unity connects with the anal phase since the 'child lives in a symbolic relationship with its mother'.⁹⁷ Being part of the oral stage, the oscillations that take place between insecurity and control of language, such as the use of satire, the sadomasochistic style, misogynistic attacks, and criticisms, act as a defence mechanism to cover up male resentment and insecurity towards female sexuality. *La Curée* and *Nana* are examined for such linguistic properties in Chapter Four. Besides the sensational effect that these novels provide, as well as their critique of a decadent period, they also show the need to control female sexuality in order to dissipate the phantom which lies within and which continues to be silently transmitted to Renée and Nana. This chapter studies the perverse, sadistic, and decadent language in these novels. I refer to *L'Assommoir* only insofar as it is relevant to my examination of Zola's language.

In this chapter, I attempt to decipher the symptoms of auto-eroticism, voyeurism, and paedophilia that these novels encompass because such symptoms originate from an unsuccessful infantile sexual development. This chapter is divided into two parts: the first examines prostitution in nineteenth-century France and relates it to masculine anxiety and sexual insecurity; the second is subdivided into five sections, each using a psychological interpretation to analyse the novels.

Finally, in Chapters Five and Six I show how the third stage of writing, the phallic, is where the process of individuation takes place. This occurs when the novelist has overcome the division imposed by his childhood milieu, and 'has divested himself of the false wrapping of his persona [the feminine spectral presence] by abandoning his ego-defence' through

⁹⁶ Mitterand quotes the Goncourt brothers and Flaubert's views of Zola's sexual phantasms in relation to the writing of the *Rougon-Macquart*, especially with regard to *Nana* and *Pot-Bouille*. See, Mitterand, *Zola*, II, 204-10.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 27.

writing.⁹⁸ Jung's concept of individuation is also pertinent for this stage. *Le Docteur Pascal* and *Vérité* belong to this phase as they show a maturity which was not present in the previous novels. In *Le Docteur Pascal* Zola divests himself of the trauma that gripped him throughout his creative life. This fifth chapter concentrates on Pascal and connects the novelist to his protagonist. I focus on what is hidden in Pascal's cupboard and relate what I, as a reader, am led to discover: the return, through Clotilde, of Marie/Miette (or her phantom) into the family tree. Through this technique, Zola explores the ways in which he is haunted by a ghostly femininity in this novel because his artistry is also connected to the repressed. In this chapter, I argue that Marie's spectre is important in so far as it pervades the rest of the texts to be reincarnated in Clotilde. The narrator is, in this novel, giving the reader clues to his secrets through Pascal. In turn, I connect *La Fortune des Rougon* and *Thérèse Raquin* to Pascal's unspeakable and shameful secret. I also look at previously examined novels since all topics considered therein are arguably present in this novel and dealt with by Pascal and the narrator.

In the final chapter I explore *Vérité* and suggest how this novel might be read as a representation of the conclusion of anxiety and sexual inhibitions. In *Vérité*, through the voice of his narrator, Zola confronts the phantom within; I argue that this novel is a veiled account of the Dreyfus Affair and suggest that Zola uses personal trauma to symbolize national trauma. I look at critics who have worked on such themes and examine their arguments in relation to mine. Arguably, *Vérité* speaks Zola's 'truth', effectively supporting the theory on Zola's language presented in this thesis. *Vérité* is important to examine because it indirectly exposes the reader to the taboo of child sexual abuse and denounces pederasty. Nonetheless, I also consider Zéphirin's sexual assault as an indictment of the fabric of a corrupt French judicial, social, and religious system. I discuss Zola's anticlerical views and highlight, through the narrator's point of view, what he understood to be his true Christian ideal.

⁹⁸ Anthony Stevens, *Jung: A Short Introduction* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 36, 42, 61, 81.

In my conclusion, I suggest that trauma may well have found expression in Zola's language and show that *Vérité* functions as catharsis. My close analysis of the chosen novels will suggest that Zola's texts hold secrets that are taboo and hence too shameful to express and are concealed in the 'fabric' of the *Rougon-Macquart* novels.

Chapter Two

La Fortune des Rougon, Thérèse Raquin, and Madeleine Férat

‘But he [the narrator] little knows what surprises lie in wait for him, if someone were to set about analysing the mass of truth and falsehoods which he has collected here’- ‘Dr. S’, Italo Svevo, *Confessions of Zeno*.¹

This chapter investigates how secrets are represented in *La Fortune des Rougon* and *Thérèse Raquin*.² It primarily questions the reasons for the dramatic representation of Marie’s tombstone and relates her mystery to that of Thérèse in *Thérèse Raquin*. It argues that the tombstone symbolizes the repressed and connects it to Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok’s theory of the phantom.

This chapter is divided into two parts: the first part shows how the theory of the crypt functions in *Thérèse Raquin* and *La Fortune des Rougon*; the second part examines how Freud’s theory of infantile sexuality, principally its libidinal development, operates in these novels. It concentrates mainly on *Thérèse Raquin* and *Madeleine Férat* and demonstrates how the theory of the phantom which is developed in the first part exists as a dual unity with that of Freud’s theory of infantile sexuality.

¹ Italo Svevo, *Confessions of Zeno* (London: Penguin Classics, 1923).

² Zola, *La Fortune des Rougon*, in *Les Rougon-Macquart* (Paris: Gallimard, 1960-67), I, 5-23 and 41-50; Zola, *Thérèse Raquin*, ed. Robert Abirached (Paris: Gallimard, 1979), pp. 31-5 and 72.

Part 1 *La Fortune des Rougon* and *Thérèse Raquin*: The Purpose of L'aire Saint-Mittre and Le Passage du Pont-Neuf.

Gérard Genette remarks that in novel writing there is a story and there is a plot: he argues that 'Il faut distinguer des degrés et complexité d'histoire, avec ou sans nœud'.³ 'Il y a des temps et des lieux pour l'histoire, il y a des temps et des lieux pour l'intrigue' (pp. 14-15). The story of Marie is intriguing in that her history, in the description of her tombstone, does not relate to the ensuing plot in *La Fortune des Rougon*. This would point to a mystery which is connected to the 'ordre temporel' of Marie's narrative (Genette, p. 13) and is subsequently linked to the stories of Silvère and Miette, and later to that of Adelaïde in that she is the one who holds, according to the narrator 'un mystère quelconque' (*La Fortune des Rougon*, p. 41). By the time Silvère's character appears, Marie's story and the description of her tomb are presented to the reader (pp. 9-11); this is followed by the entrance of Miette whose voice, whilst looking for Silvère, sounds like a ghost. This is emphasized by the narrator's remark while describing Silvère's seated position on the tomb: 'Il gardait son arme en joue depuis une grande minute, lorsqu'une voix légère comme un souffle, basse et haletante, vint du Jas-Meffrein' (p. 13). In this passage, the narrator introduces Silvère, Marie's tombstone, and Miette in a successive manner, followed later by Adelaïde's story. Indeed in this scene, each character has a temporal and spatial place which is governed by a sequence of events which in turn connects with the world of the dead (Silvère and Miette's secret meeting-place is set in an old cemetery where Marie's remnants lie and where their bodies will eventually be interred). This sequence is organized by the governing structure of Marie's narrative which coincides with Silvère's and later with Miette's entrance in the scene as shown. Marie's mystery becomes then inseparable from Miette in that both their intrinsic presences, within the realm of this passage, co-exist since for Miette the cemetery is familiar, as the narrator tells his reader: 'cet étrange chemin

³ Genette, *Nouveau discours du récit*, pp. 14-15.

lui devait être familier' (p. 13). The narrator's viewpoint and his voice within the narrative are examined as they are party to the ghostly atmosphere that this passage imparts and therefore connect to the unconscious. In this passage the narrator is unidentified; we only hear a voice that merges with the description of the crypt.⁴ In other words, his narrative is associated with a life beyond the grave since he is caught up in the stories of Silvère, Miette, and Marie. This point is also relevant to the examination of *Le Passage du Pont-Neuf* in *Thérèse Raquin* in that there are some similarities that exist between both passages in these novels, an argument to which I will return in Section 1.2.

Marie's 'presence' in the description of her tomb is arguably connected to the story of Miette and Silvère and to Adelaïde as well. It is thus necessary to question her presence in the narrative of this novel since it is a mystery to the reader. Marie's narrative is extra-diegetic in terms of her absence in subsequent scenes (in Genette's words, 'hors-fiction'). Yet, Marie's tomb and her mystery in the first part of the novel are important to the rest of the texts under examination because the origins of her birth and death are arguably linked to a history, that of Adelaïde even if Marie's narrative is brief. Indeed, its duration in the narrative is questionable, but is important since it relates to the successive, but necessary introduction of Miette. It is questionable because her narrative is limited and digresses from the rest of the plot. Nevertheless, Marie's stated but short 'entrance' brings about subsequent events which affect the ways in which the following stories are narrated since her 'tragic' history is arguably entangled with that of the female characters, principally with Adelaïde.

Since Marie's story is recounted according to the narrator's point of view, we could argue that Zola uses his narrator's voice in introducing Marie's tombstone as the chorus of an ancient Greek tragedy who forewarns the audience of disastrous impending consequences that will befall her descendants. Likewise, we could also argue that the narrator presents the

⁴ Seymour Chatman, 'Discourse: Nonnarrated Stories', in *Essentials in the Theory of Fiction*, ed. by Michael J. Hoffman and Patrick D. Murphy, 3rd edn (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 2005), p. 146.

reader with a prologue about the tomb of Marie whose tragic story will affect her descendants. Indeed, for Genette, 'Dès qu'il y a acte ou évènement, fût-il unique, il y a histoire, car il y a transformation d'un passage d'un état antérieur à un état ultérieur et résultant' (p. 14, my emphasis). Marie's introduction into this novel is 'unique' since it stands on its own and does not relate to the novel's sequenced narrative, but holds a history, as the narrator points out: 'ces faits dates de loin. Depuis plus de trente ans' (*La Fortune des Rougon*, p. 7). Genette also argues that in narration 'il n'y a pas de contenus narratifs, il y a des enchaînements d'actions'.⁵ Genette's observations correlate with my latter comparison of the narrator to the chorus since, in this case, Zola's 'chorus' or narrator, foretells the subsequent problems and woes which will affect the *Rougon-Macquart* members.

Admittedly, Marie's presence in the narrative may be linked to contemporary obsessions with the occult, the supernatural, and the mystic. John Burrow defines occultism as 'a fascination with magic' and argues that this was particularly strong in France.⁶ It is possible that Zola was interested in Spiritism whose founder was Allan Kardec - his real name was Hypolite Leon Denizard - (1804-1869). Kardec believed in the doctrine of reincarnation and in spirits and challenged Catholic dogma. He drew extensively on Auguste Comte's philosophy of empirical sciences. Since Spiritism was believed to be the religious basis for an 'empirical science' and 'for a new Republican France', as Katie Anderson understands, it is plausible that Zola was experimenting with Marie's tombstone because he used it as a metaphor for the reincarnation of a new French Republic and, through her death, heralded a new social Christianity.⁷ Furthermore, in preserving the mystery of Marie and burying it beneath the language of the texts, as represented by the presence of the crypt, we may also argue that Zola

⁵ Genette, *Nouveau discours du récit*, pp.13-14.

⁶ John Burrow, *The Crisis of Reason, European Thought 1848-1914* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 225. See also: Eugene Weber, 'Religion and Superstition in Nineteenth-Century France', *The Historical Journal*, 31, 2 (1988), 403; John Wayne Monroe, *Evidence of Things not Seen: Spiritism, Occultism and a Search for a Modern Faith in France 1853-1925* (PhD Diss., Yale University, 2000).

⁷ Katie Anderson, *The Occult Revival in Nineteenth-Century France* <[http://www.academia.edu/1371245/The Occult Revival in Nineteenth Century France](http://www.academia.edu/1371245/The_Occult_Revival_in_Nineteenth_Century_France)> [accessed July 2014].

was silently transmitting this unspoken taboo to Adelaïde's and Thérèse's narratives through his own definition of the process of *transubstantiation* in Roman Catholic theology. In other words, as the body and blood of Jesus Christ is consecrated into bread and wine, Zola arguably used Marie's death to function as a sacrifice in order to redeem Adelaïde's 'fêlure' (see section 1.3 for further detail). However, in contrast to the meaning of Christian transubstantiation, Marie's spectral 'presence' transcends her descendants, but is metaphorically transformed into a 'diseased' body which contaminates principally the female characters. Renée in *La Curée* and Nana in *Nana*, Serge in *La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret*, and Jacques in *La Bête humaine* all suffer this contaminated inheritance as we will see in Chapters Three and Four. If we accept this argument, we can argue that Zola challenges the Catholic Church's beliefs, and thus demystifies the theological process of transubstantiation. Although this theory on the doctrine(s) of reincarnation is possible since it relates to the haunting effect of Marie's 'presence', there is nevertheless a 'causal function' that is going on in this part of the novel, one which translates as a metaphor of writing in the narrative of Marie: for this interpretation, it is presented as the return of her ghost. Zola makes use of this literary technique to 'stage the return of a dispossessed femininity' and to 'use the spectral as a means to evaluate his own artistic act'.⁸

In a note to *Fors*, Jacques Derrida remarks that the 'crypt from which the ghost comes back belongs to someone else'.⁹ Marie's spectral presence is also explained in this thesis in terms of her spectral 'transtextualité'.¹⁰ This is then 'silently' transmitted through a cryptic form of narration which functions in this narrative as the 'crypt effect of the text' (Castricano, p. 38). The borders which enclose Marie's crypt represent the dividing lines or the demarcation beyond which the reader cannot cross. Castricano defines this as 'cryptomimesis' which for her

⁸ Griffiths, 'Scribbling Ghosts', p. 51.

⁹ Castricano quotes Derrida, *Spectres de Marx*, p. 119, in *Cryptomimesis*, p. 27.

¹⁰ Genette, *Palimpsestes*.

contains a threshold or borderlines not to be trespassed over.¹¹ I will relate Castricano's theory of cryptomimesis in novel writing to the narrator's *récit* of Marie's 'history' whilst examining the description of the tomb in *La Fortune des Rougon* and Le Passage du Pont-Neuf in *Thérèse Raquin*.

Zola's realist fiction (in depicting the story of a family under the Second Empire) does not stand in the description of Marie's tombstone in *La Fortune des Rougon*; there is an ambiguous irony: in introducing Marie's tombstone, the narrator does not explain the reason for her presence in the narrative. Whilst intentionally removing her or her story from the rest of the plot, it is feasible that Zola omitted her because she did not fit with his naturalist project. Yet, realist and naturalist fiction should 'tell' and 'show' the vagaries of a decadent period, be it political or social, as Balzac's *La Comédie Humaine* and Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* and *L'Éducation sentimentale* do for example. Even though realist novelists represent the inexpressible or the taboo often in cryptic form, they also 'often manipulate a story's temporal unfolding by telling a tale out of chronological order and, in that way, exploiting the tension among story, narrative and plot', as Michael Hoffman and Patrick Murphy observe in their essays on the theory of fiction.¹² It is precisely because Marie's story is not developed in the rest of the plot that her character remains mysterious and spectral. Her absence from the subsequent plot is necessary because through this technique Zola reproduces her spectre in the following texts and, as already shown, the taboo nature of her secret haunts and disturbs the lives of her descendants beginning with Adelaïde. Zola's modus operandi in exploiting this technique is looked into and examined in this chapter in order to highlight the different devices used by the author to mislead the reader into presenting him or her with the mystery of Marie.¹³

¹¹ Castricano, *Cryptomimesis*.

¹² Michael J. Hoffman and Patrick D. Murphy, (eds.), *Essentials of the Theory of Fiction*, 3rd edn (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 2005), p. 11.

¹³ *Ibid.*

Whilst accepting that the *Rougon-Macquart* novels are experimental, based on a theme of heredity, this interpretation also suggests that female sexuality, represented as evil in some of the novels, is linked to the female spectre who haunts the author of those texts. This argument is relevant to the examination of Marie's narrative and its relationship to Thérèse in *Thérèse Raquin*.

Despite the cryptic nature which envelops the narrative of Marie's tombstone and that of *Le Passage du Pont-Neuf*, Zola reproduces the mystery which pervades these novels in *Adelaïde and Thérèse* in order to project the drama that is taking place within the narrative; in so doing, the novelist adopts a rhetorical mode of concealment to highlight feelings of a haunted past: as the author, Zola lets his omniscient narrator point us to a mystery which is encrypted in the tombstone and, through the narrator's voice and his point of view, he discloses his perceptions with regard to the death of innocent children, yet he does not tell us what the nature of that death is.

In his work on Zola's myths, Jean Borie also questions why Zola never informs the reader of the true origin of the hereditary flaw that exists in the Rougon-Macquart family and remarks that 'jamais, Zola ne précise quel est ce premier crime qui accablera la famille de sa malédiction. Tout au plus, peut-on remarquer que le premier roman de la série raconte le meurtre d'un enfant'.¹⁴ Nevertheless, Zola offers the reader some signs as to what the mystery is related to, particularly through the use of euphemisms, symbols, encrypted signs, and allusions as a means to evoke the unspeakable through language, (see section 1.3 for further detail). As a result, the repressed is reflected through this stream of consciousness which I argue passes between the narrator's voice, the characters' thoughts (Miette's and Silvère's as highlighted in the opening passages of this novel, see pp. 5-14), and that of the implied author, reinforcing thus Riffaterre's examination of the relationship that can exist between the unconscious of the text (the text comes alive through the narrator's voice) and human

¹⁴ Borie, *Zola et les mythes*, p. 43.

unconscious.¹⁵ This indicates the presence of a crypt which Zola keeps concealed because the story of Marie and that of Thérèse's origins are too shameful to be expressed and should thus be transmitted silently to the reader. Arguably, Zola is figuratively sitting on his family's crypt whilst attempting to deal with the secret of Marie. In so doing, he opens the door to the spectre of a dead relative 'that exists in his ego' who 'returns to deliver a message' in order to disclose the trauma suffered by an earlier generation.¹⁶

1.1 L'aire Saint-Mittre, Le Passage du Pont-Neuf, and the 'Return of the Repressed'

For Castricano the crypt functions as a way of producing concealment and is, according to her, what Heidegger calls 'aletheia'.¹⁷ Heidegger defines aletheia as 'disclosure' or 'unconcealedness'.¹⁸ The concealed nature of the crypt ironically discloses a secret. Nevertheless, Castricano cautions against using the crypt merely as a metaphor for the unconscious, which for Abraham and Torok sits in the recess of the mind and is hidden, secret and latent. She further proposes not to take the crypt as a literal meaning, but rather as a term referring to a writing practice that takes into account a secret, a tomb, a burial, and a return.¹⁹ She suggests that while silence figures heavily in the transmission of the taboo secret, Abraham's theory of the phantom exists also side by side with 'haunting and writing, since each, in its own way, posits that the return of the dead enacts an inheritance – a will, beyond the grave'(p. 29). Castricano strengthens the inseparable link that exists between writing, textuality, the phantom, and haunting in that, for her, 'writing is phantom-driven and that we all have our ghosts'. Castricano supports her argument in referring to Derrida's understanding in *Spectres de Marx* that 'everyone reads, acts, writes with his and her ghosts'.²⁰ Zola's cryptic

¹⁵ Riffaterre, *Fictional Truth*, p. 94.

¹⁶ Davis, *Haunted Subjects*, p. 10. See also Abraham and Torok, *L'Écorce et le noyau*, p. 427.

¹⁷ Castricano, *Cryptomimesis*, p. 29.

¹⁸ See 'Wikipedia' in <www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aletheia> [accessed September 2014].

¹⁹ Jacques Derrida, 'Fors': les mots ANGLISH de Nicolas Abraham et Maria Torok', in Abraham and Torok, *Le Verbier de l'homme aux loups*, pp. 10-11.

²⁰ Castricano, *Cryptomimesis*, p. 29.

method in presenting Marie's tombstone and describing Le Passage du Pont-Neuf in *Thérèse Raquin* models Derrida's views regarding the relationship between writing and ghosts.²¹

The descriptions of L'aire Saint-Mittre in *La Fortune des Rougon* and Le Passage du Pont-Neuf in *Thérèse Raquin* highlight the presence of a phantom who manifests itself in the narrative as the sign of the return of the repressed; and, as Abraham suggests in *L'Écorce et le noyau*, 'le "fantôme" sous toutes ses formes [...] est bien l'invention des vivants. [...] la lacune qu'a créée en nous l'occultation d'une partie de la vie d'un objet aimé. [...] Le fantôme est donc, aussi, un fait métapsychologique, [...] les lacunes laissées en nous par les secrets des autres' (p. 427). For Freud, the concept of the phantom has to do with certain kinds of feelings or sensations; something fearful and frightening that is related to the revelation of what is private and concealed, of what is hidden. In Freudian terminology the secret is the sign of the return of the repressed.²²

In introducing Marie's narrative, Zola presents the reader with a puzzle, one which contains enigmatic words in Marie's epitaph. This is reflected by the enclosed, cryptic, and overpowering tomb-like effects that the opening passages of *La Fortune des Rougon* and *Thérèse Raquin* reflect: the narrative is governed in both passages by words which support the theories of the phantom. Before this is evaluated, it is important to look at Naomi Schor's interpretation of both L'aire Saint-Mittre and the encrypted message on Marie's tombstone.²³

Even though Schor highlights the secret that relates to the encrypted message on the tombstone, she remarks that it is a mystery that Zola does not tell the reader its true source, and rightly assesses that for the novelist 'to write is to name the unnameable' (p. 72). Schor develops her argument around the secret and believes that Zola based his scene in the cemetery on a myth, whose origin is the violent sacrifice of innocent people as scapegoats or

²¹ Ibid.

²² See Sigmund Freud, 'The Uncanny', in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. and trans. by James Trachey, 24 vols (London: Hogarth Press, 1953-74), xvii, 219-52.

²³ Naomi Schor, *Zola's Crowds: Before and After* (Baltimore, MD, and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), p. 72.

pharmakoi during the French Revolution. She maintains that Marie is the victim of that revolution and recalls René Girard's anthropological work on the connection between violence and the sacred to sustain her argument. Schor acknowledges that Zola was withholding a secret which he represented in this novel as 'la première lésion organique'.²⁴ She also links the novel's subtitle to the cemetery and points us to the origins of L'aire Saint-Mittre where Marie lies. She argues that the burial place is the origin of the *Rougon-Macquart* novels and questions the nature of the secret highlighted by Zola's use of the word 'passé' with regard to Marie's death, and asserts that it is the central focus for the creation of the series. She maintains that Marie's death revolves around a 'récit mytho-mimétique'.²⁵ Schor also questions why Zola presents Marie's death as a mystery: 'Pourquoi avoir doté ce terrain vague d'une histoire, d'un passé ?'.²⁶ She queries the anxiety of origin in the *Rougon-Macquart* which obsessed Zola, but also insists that 'there is more to this cemetery than meets the eye, that there is something hidden here'.²⁷

Schor's examination of Marie is relevant to my analysis and closely compares since she emphasizes that there is a secret in this novel, although she maintains that Marie is the victim of a blood-thirsty revolution. Her argument is relevant particularly in relation to the mystery insofar as she too believes that Marie's burial place is the origin of the *Rougon-Macquart* and holds a secret. This, in turn, is symbolized in the form of an inherited female organic disease particularly related to the birth of Marie. As explained in Chapter One, Marie's death and her secret pave the way for the subsequent illustrations and representations of female sexuality because the organizing principle that structures her presence in the narrative lies in the logic governing the sequences of events, introducing de facto the stories of Silvère and Miette and, as we will see in the subsequent chapters, those of Serge, Jacques, Renée, and Nana. Schor remarks, nevertheless, that Zola is giving us a clue in the preface to the novel: 'prenons acte

²⁴ Schor, 'Mythes des origines, origine des mythes, p. 127.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 125.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Schor, *Zola's Crowds*, p. 16.

d'une perche que Zola nous tend'; yet, she does not say what the clue is. She maintains, nonetheless, that the 'premières pages du roman seront des pages privilégiées.' Schor also questions whether there was 'un autre évènement qui se profile derrière ce déménagement?'²⁸ She believes that there is behind this more than a story which recounts the death of innocent children during the Revolution, but admits that the reader, seduced by the narrator's dialogue, can be blinded to the interpretation of this novel by not interpreting beyond the narrative.

Although Schor's argument is valid, I go further by speculating that Marie's ghost functions as a 'conceptual apparatus, [as] it illuminates [the text] while it anticipates another'.²⁹ I propose that Marie's 'presence' in the text represents for Zola the 'lost object fantasized ego - the shadow effect of the other' which 'anticipates the memory of the departed' (Castricano, pp. 35, 38). In other words, I suggest that Zola, through his narrator's discourse, mourns her death. As proposed in Chapter One, the narrator is arguably connected with the (implied) author of this novel insofar as the narration takes place in an imagined world where the narrator echoes the author's thoughts.³⁰ This is also observed by John Brenkman in his essay on the function of the voice in narratives.³¹ For Brenkman, the role of the implied author is to 'contemplate', reducing thus the author's activity to contemplation, because he simply observes what he *transmits* to his narrator, his views, his perceptions, and his thoughts.

Since the narrator is the implied author in this novel, Marie's story becomes subjective in that she is the subject of the narrator's affects since he transmits to the reader the author's own perceptions and thoughts over his (deceased) character. Subsequently, Marie's ghost lives in the living ego which, for Abraham, represents the crypt. Castricano argues that the crypt functions as a process of mourning. For her, the ghost comes back because 'what is buried is

²⁸ Schor, 'Mythes des origines, origines des mythes', pp. 124, 126.

²⁹ Castricano, *Cryptomimesis*, p. 49.

³⁰ See note 87, p. 36.

³¹ John Brenkman, 'On Voice', in *Essentials of the Theory of Fiction*, ed. by Hoffman and Murphy, p. 429.

untellable and therefore inaccessible to the gradual, powerful, assimilative work of mourning'. For my part, what is 'tellable', in this first part of the novel, is untellable because it exists outside the text and represents the secret. Since the passages under examination highlight a tension which is related to death and mourning, it is possible that the lost object represents the loss of M. Zola, the novelist's father. This argument does not however answer the mystery that pervades Marie's crypt, or does it? I would like to suggest in my reading of this passage that Zola is perhaps telling the reader obliquely that there is a child who could be the issue of a mysterious relationship that occurred some time ago, given the sentence 'Ces faits datent de loin. Depuis plus de trente' (*La Fortune des Rougon*, p. 7), and who is lying dead in the ground. It is possible that Zola was giving the reader a clue regarding a secret which he represented in the fictional tombstone's epitaph through the phrase 'Cy-gist... Marie... morte...' (p. 11). The elliptical nature of the epitaph indicates that Marie's death happened some time ago and was kept secret. This suggests an omission of essential information, a 'paralepse' as Genette understands.³² Arguably, Zola appears to be withholding information. Whilst proposing in this chapter that the above novels reflect events that may have taken place during the novelist's life, it is important to understand that the following theory is speculative and relies solely on the close reading of the passages in question, while any biographical detail is used to explain what the text suggests.

In *La Vérité en marche* Zola refutes Ernest Judet's accusations about his father whilst he was stationed in Algiers with the Foreign Legion.³³ Zola denied his father's actions and argued that the documents were forged, but admitted that 'une femme avait passé, et il était fou. [...] seulement quel était son rôle exact?' (*La Vérité en marche*, p. 246).³⁴ Although Zola questions what the woman's role in the affair was, he insists that this relationship 'reste si

³² Genette, *Le nouveau discours du récit*, p. 45.

³³ Ernest Judet, 'Zola, père et fils', *Le Petit Journal*, 23 May 1898; reprinted in Emile Zola, *La Vérité en marche* (Paris: Charpentier, 1901), p. 248. Judet published an article on Zola's father, François Zola, to denigrate the novelist for taking side with Dreyfus and for writing *J'Accuse...*!

³⁴ See also *La Vérité en marche*, pp. 247-50 and 287.

étrange qu'elle prête à des hypothèses d'une psychologie si singulière qu'en l'absence de tout document certain, je n'ose me prononcer [...] une femme est certainement au fond de l'affaire' (p. 286). Although Zola was unable to support his argument with documentary evidence, he gives the reader his personal feelings to the story and observes that it haunted him: 'J'ai passé des nuits [...] à tâcher de la comprendre' (*La Vérité en marche*, p. 286). Could we interpret this by suggesting that Zola might have suspected his father of having conceived a child with this woman? There is no evidence to support this hypothesis. Indeed, Zola agrees that his father's affair with the wife of a fellow captain is bizarre, yet, he insists that without documentary evidence he is unable to express an opinion about the nature of this affair. Precisely, because we do not have any documents to suggest that the birth of a child actually occurred, any speculation on the nature of the relationship between M. Zola and his lover is hazardous. Nevertheless, given that female sexuality is perceived as bad in most of the novels, it is conceivable that Adelaïde and Thérèse embody M. Zola's lover who comes back to haunt Zola's fictional world. We could argue that this spectre returns to haunt the narratives of the *Rougon-Macquart* and of *Thérèse Raquin* as a metaphor for a female figure 'trapped in the margins of scriptural existence' (Griffiths, p. 57). If we consider this possibility and relate it to Marie, we may suggest that Marie's death and her 'return' in this part of the novel stand for the mystery because this implies the death of a child due to female concupiscence and is thus unspeakable.

Zola's first novel to recount the murder of a child is arguably *Thérèse Raquin*. This is illustrated from the narrator's point of view, in his *discours indirect libre* about his character's decision to bring about a miscarriage:

A tout prix, elle voulut débarrasser son sein de cet enfant qui la glaçait et qu'elle ne pouvait porter d'avantage. Elle ne dit rien à son mari, et, un jour, après l'avoir cruellement provoqué, comme il levait le pied contre elle, elle présenta le ventre. Elle se laissa frapper ainsi à en mourir. Le lendemain, elle faisait une fausse couche. (*Thérèse Raquin*, p. 278)

I suggest that the opening passages of *La Fortune des Rougon* are the sequel to *Thérèse Raquin* since Thérèse miscarries before she kills herself and since this novel pre-dates *La Fortune des Rougon*. Adelaïde comes from 'une famille obscure' and committed 'certaines actions que les plus fortes têtes du faubourg ne purent raisonnablement expliquer'. She holds 'un mystère quelconque' and takes a lover, Macquart, and between them they produce 'des bâtards', one of whom may represent Marie. Thérèse was born in Oran (*Thérèse Raquin*, p. 40). She is given to Madame Raquin by her father 'Capitaine Degans' after his return from Algeria (p. 39). Since her name is written in red (a colour symbolic of blood and passion), the narrative suggests that she is the first female character to commit a crime through passion, or for Zola, through the need to gratify sexual impulses. She is the one who arrives from Oran to live with her aunt and cousin Camille (*Thérèse Raquin*, p. 39). In *Thérèse Raquin*, it is her arrival from that foreign land (Algeria) that will overwhelm the Raquin family with its malediction. It is helpful to understand Thérèse's and Adelaïde's stories in order to appreciate what is hidden behind the narratives and to connect them to Marie's death and to the repressed.

1.2 The Dynamics of Language in the Representation of Thérèse and Marie

In his preface to the second edition of *Thérèse Raquin*, Zola tells us that he will recount '[Les] amours de mes deux héros' and 'le contentement d'un besoin', or the need for Thérèse (and for Adelaïde) to find sexual satisfaction. Zola's reference to his 'deux héros' is sarcastic because it is followed by his allusion to 'adultère' and to 'meurtre' (p. 24). These words are important for this analysis in that they strengthen the narrator's resentment towards Thérèse and Adelaïde as they reinforce the adulterous and murder themes that both passages convey in these novels. The relationship between narrator and implied author (although in the above statement it is Zola who is addressing the reader), is furthermore strengthened by Brenkman who argues that 'the mystery of a character, however, belongs more to the novelistic truth than [to] narratological lie'. He further remarks that 'novelists know about their characters and

unlike their protagonists, see through the abstractness of the conflicts between the latter's inner world and the outer world' (p. 420). Zola is in command of his characters' temperaments; his voice is heard through the imaginative narrator who only holds a 'rhetorical zone' as Brenkman also suggests.³⁵ This then relates to the secret, something that is familiar but dreaded and is reproduced in these novels by a 'set of equivalence' as Brenkman further explains. For him, the 'uncanny requires the homely narrative as its base' (p. 428).

Admittedly, Marie is also the victim of neglect because her death originates, as I have argued, from adultery, which in turn is related to Adelaïde (*La Fortune des Rougon*, p. 42). Her mother is believed to be Adelaïde, as the narrator implies in this novel when describing Adelaïde's family origins: 'On voulut voir un mystère quelconque au fond de cette affaire' (p. 42). Her mystery is also related, in the narrative, to her having 'cette canaille de Macquart' as lover, as expressed by the narrator (p. 43).

As was suggested above, *Thérèse Raquin* belongs to the *Rougon-Macquart* series: arguably, Thérèse is part of the branch of the female protagonists and belongs to the Rougon's female clan in that she is akin to Adelaïde with regard to her sexuality and, according to the narrator, has committed a crime in betraying Camille and in miscarrying. Both have had lovers and most likely 'killed' in terms of neglecting their children; in Thérèse's case it is through induced miscarriage. Although the narrator is not explicit about Adelaïde's baby (see the reference to 'bâtards', p. 43) he makes allusion to it by stating that she had a clandestine affair in her 'logis de l'Impasse Saint-Mittre' with Macquart, her lover, which remained 'hermétiquement clos et garda ses secrets' (p. 45). Castricano's observations about writing practice in relation to the crypt are valid in that Adelaïde's secret remains entombed and is reflected in the death of Marie whose ghost comes back to haunt the lives of her descendants. We should note that this place is adjacent to the cemetery:

³⁵ Brenkman, 'On Voice', p. 415.

Il y avait là, dans l'angle, une vieille pierre tombale, oubliée lors du déménagement de l'ancien cimetière [...], et qui, posée sur le champ et un peu de biais faisait une sorte de banc élevé. La pluie en avait émietté les bords, la mousse la rongait lentement. On eût cependant pu lire encore, au clair de lune, ce fragment d'épithaphe gravé sur la face qui entrait en terre: *Cy-gist... Marie... morte...* Le temps avait effacé le reste. (*La Fortune des Rougon*, pp. 10-11)

Au bout de la rue Guénégaud [...], on trouve le Passage du Pont-Neuf, une sorte de corridor étroit et sombre [...]. Ce passage a trente pas de long et deux de large, au plus: Il est pavé de dalles jaunâtres, usées, descellées, suant toujours une humidité âcre; le vitrage qui le couvre, coupé à angle droit, est noir de crasse.

À gauche, se creusent des boutiques obscures, basses, écrasées, laissant échapper des souffles froids de caveau. Il y a là des bouquinistes, des marchands de jouets d'enfant, des cartonniers, dont les étalages gris de poussière dorment vaguement dans l'ombre; [...] au-delà, derrière les étalages, les boutiques pleines de ténèbres sont autant de trous lugubres dans lesquels s'agitent des formes bizarres.

Au-dessus du vitrage, la muraille monte, noire, grossièrement crépie, comme couverte d'une lèpre et tout couturée de cicatrices. (*Thérèse Raquin*, pp. 31-32)

A parallel runs through the descriptions of Marie's tombstone and Le Passage du Pont-Neuf; this relates to the ghostly effect that both passages provide. In the first example we detect the tone of the narrator's voice and compare it to that describing Le Passage du Pont-Neuf: if we read both passages aloud, we can see that in the first one the tone of the narrator's voice is different from the one in the second; at first it sounds melodic and poetic in recounting the presence of the tomb and its 'inhabitant', then the tone changes to a pragmatic and prosaic one in its brief announcement in the final sentence: 'Le temps avait effacé le reste'. Arguably, for the narrator, Marie's story is closed as it becomes apparent that Zola does not wish to develop her story further to the reader. This is supported by the subsequent absence of Marie from the novel. I return to the function of the narrator's voice and his involvement in the narrative later. In the second passage, the tone is descriptive and invites the reader to the area of the 'Passage', to present him or her with facts which will lead later to the sequence of events in the narrative of Thérèse and Laurent. Nonetheless, although both passages differ in tone, they both convey a phantasmagorical or mysterious feel which evokes the dreaded and thus awakes the reader's own *Heimlich*, something that is strange yet familiar, which cannot be explained: this is illustrated by the cryptic elements within the language and in the haunting

tones that both passages convey. We might argue that Zola predates Freud's theory of the return of the repressed.³⁶

In the first passage, the narrator is present in the description of Marie's tombstone whereas he should normally be detached or impartial since Marie's story is reported to have happened in the past, 'ces faits datent de plus de trente ans', and so, should not form part of this novel (*La Fortune des Rougon*, p. 7). As exemplified, Genette's clear distinction between history and plot in novel writing sustains the argument made about the narrator's personal interest in Marie's story.³⁷ It is precisely because the reader identifies the narrator's voice in this part of the narrative that his voice becomes homo-diegetic - although it should be 'hors-texte' - thus making Marie's story enigmatic yet interesting for the present study; the words that govern this argument are found in the mystery that this passage conveys. In the second passage, the narrator has a voice as in the first, but is identified in the narrative in so far as his voice simply *guides* his reader within the confines of the dark corridors of Le Passage du Pont-Neuf. The distinction between tone of voice and narratorial identification is necessary in that we are dealing with an unreliable narrator who obfuscates the truth whilst revealing subjectivity towards Marie's death. The following analysis of Marie, the description of her crypt, her 'relationship' - in terms of the narrative's spatial zone with Silvère and Miette -, and the description of Le Passage du Pont-Neuf highlight this problem and relate these narratives to the unconscious.

³⁶ See Freud, 'The Uncanny', in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, XVII, 219-52.

³⁷ Genette, *Nouveau récit du discours*, pp. 14-15.

1.3 Marie and the Return of the Phantom

When describing the theory of the crypt Abraham and Torok remark:

La présence du cryptonisme indique l'existence d'une crypte, d'un clivage dans le Moi, ainsi qu'un autre destin du même mot: sa fétichisation dans l'Inconscient. [...]. Chaque partie de son Moi, pour subsister doit dire autre chose — le Moi de la crypte s'imagine être un vrai témoin, alors que l'autre Moi requiert le témoignage comme faux.³⁸

Grâce à ce subterfuge, le texte du drame qui s'écrit derrière son for intérieur, pourra se jouer par devant, sur le for extérieur si l'on ose dire.³⁹

For Derrida, 'the spectre's secret is a productive opening of meaning [...] to be uncovered'.⁴⁰ I deconstruct phrases below which indicate that a child has died. Indeed, Marie's mysterious epitaph, as already argued, acts as a puzzle in this passage. Likewise, the words such as 'oubliée', as in forgotten, and 'émietté', as in crumbling, used to describe the tombstone, reflect the reader's incomprehension at the mystery of Marie's disjointed and elliptical epitaph. In order to acquire its cryptic form, Zola's language functions as 'a structural enigma which inaugurates the scene of writing'.⁴¹ Zola's representation of Marie's tombstone and the mystery that belongs to it is uncharacteristic because, as argued above, it does not fit with the rest of the novel and contradicts his naturalist project. Because the mystery is incomprehensible it is, however, present in the narrative's form, and becomes 'more ubiquitous [and] more [...] molecular, at the same time as its form dissolves' (Castricano, p. 29). Zola's style of writing in introducing Marie's tombstone is 'by necessity cryptic, because it stands on the border of divulging and hiding' a secret (p. 29). This consequently relates to the phantom existing in the living ego who comes back in both passages to haunt the narrator because it is buried in the crypt. Marie's affinity with the 'life beyond the grave consists of exchanging one's identity for a fantasmic identification' (Castricano, p. 38). This unleashes the phantom within and, as result, brings about the 'fatalité tragique' which Zola refers to in his

³⁸ Abraham and Torok, 'Les Paroles du mot, ou les rimes de la chose', in *Le Verbier de l'homme aux loups*, pp. 233-34.

³⁹ Abraham, 'Le Cas de Jonas', in *Le Verbier de l'homme aux loups*, p. 7.

⁴⁰ Jacques Derrida, quoted by Davis in *Haunted Subjects*, p. 11.

⁴¹ Castricano, p. 29.

preface to *Thérèse Raquin*, to which Miette and Silvère are indirectly sacrificed, because their fatal destiny is caused by adultery and by outside events such as the advent of the Second Empire since the novel is set in the 1851 and results in the murder of innocent children.⁴²

Through their distinct features the opening passages of *La Fortune des Rougon* and *Thérèse Raquin* relate to the presence of a phantom who haunts the narrator and is lodged in his ego. These passages provide a lingering image and might relate, as hypothesized, to the novelist's past since in his own 'galerie souterraine' (*Thérèse Raquin*, p. 33), a spectral image of a woman is presented and represented as 'La marchande [qui] sommeille au fond de son armoire, les mains cachées sous son châle' (p. 33). The first feature which connects both passages is found in the spectral and funerary images that they both convey. In *Thérèse Raquin*, the spectral image is primarily found at the beginning of the novel, when the narrator presents us with a ghostly figure of a young woman:

Vers midi, en été, lorsque le soleil brûlait les places et les rues de rayons fauves, on distinguait derrière les bonnets de l'autre vitrine, un profil, pâle et grave de jeune femme. Ce profil sortait vaguement des ténèbres qui régnaient sur la boutique'. (*Thérèse Raquin*, p. 34)

Thérèse's profile resembles that of a ghost since it is located behind the glass and is vaguely discernable as it is obscured by dark shadows that envelop Madame Raquin's shop. Thérèse's ghostly form is further described: 'On ne voyait pas le corps, qui se perdait dans l'ombre; le profil seul paraissait, d'une blancheur mate, troué d'un œil noir largement ouvert, et comme écrasé sous une épaisse chevelure sombre' (pp. 34-35). The narrative's perspective in relation to the ghostly presence in this passage is reinforced by Thérèse's 'blancheur mate' and her 'œil noir largement ouvert', but it highlights as well the narrator's negative description and opinion of his character's profile: the reader senses that this figure is distasteful and frightening as its depiction suggests, since it metamorphoses into a 'fiend', a term which Mary Shelley uses in describing the creature which Victor Frankenstein creates in *Frankenstein*

⁴² Zola, *La Fortune des Rougon*, p. 9 and *Thérèse Raquin*, p. 12.

(1818), and returns to haunt the narrator in *Thérèse Raquin*. There is a similarity between the portrayal of Thérèse's ghostly figure and that of Shelley's creature in so far as it personifies the 'hideous creature', the phantom in Thérèse's description, who 'will show signs of life [...] looking on him [the narrator] with speculative eyes'.⁴³ The similarity between both descriptions is evident since Thérèse is described as having 'un oeil noir largement ouvert'. Admittedly, Zola might have been interested in Shelley's novel since her aim was to tell a story which would 'curdle the blood'. Nevertheless, Shelley was experimenting with her creative imagination following Luigi Galvani's discovery of 'animal electricity' in the previous century. Indeed, in his editorial article in *Inside Science*, Alan S. Brown shows that 'the early experiments with electricity inspired Shelley to reanimate the monster'.⁴⁴ Arguably, the narrator's description of the 'phantom' reanimates the dead who lives in his ego because it comes back to haunt him.

The shadow figure of Thérèse's 'phantom' who comes back to haunt the narrator is furthermore strengthened by the irony detected in this passage: in the above description of Thérèse's profile coming out of the darkness, the narrator contradicts himself insofar as we have a combination of dark and light in this description; on the one hand the streets and the Square of Le Passage du Pont-Neuf are lit by the sun's rays, and, on the other hand, the profile of a woman, whose description gives a ghostly effect, emanates from dark, tenebrous skies. This supports Castricano's remarks that the presence of the phantom indicates a 'rift in the ego which for Abraham consists of exchanging one's identity with fantasmic identification' (p. 38) because Thérèse's 'phantom' is difficult to 'see' given its description, but is nevertheless present. I show below how this identification follows through when I analyse the Galerie du Pont-Neuf and its ghostly appearance.

⁴³ Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein, or, The Modern Prometheus* [1818] (Ware: Wordsworth Classics, 1993), pp. 3-4.

⁴⁴ Alan S. Brown, 'The Science that Made Frankenstein', *Inside Science* (27 October 2010), <www.insidescience.org/content/science-made-frankenstein/1116> [accessed November 2014].

Both passages are enveloped in a cryptic dialogue; this indicates mourning and is reflected by the dark tone and the 'silence' that dominates the narrative, pre-empting by this imagery death: the deaths of Miette and of Silvère, and later those of Camille and Thérèse's unborn baby. The dark tone of the narrative in both passages and their distinctive funerary and frightening aspects are strengthened by the feeling of terror that pervades the passages. The old cemetery remains the 'objet d'épouvante' in which 'on y sent courir ces souffles chaud et vagues des voluptés de la mort'; a place in which the narrator, ironically, finds comfort, peace and love as he tells his readers 'Il n'y a pas, dans les campagnes de Plassans, un endroit plus ému, plus vibrant de tiédeur, de solitude et d'amour. C'est là où il est exquis d'aimer' (*La Fortune des Rougon*, p. 9). The reader wonders why the narrator finds peace and love in this place of mourning. It is because the narrator identifies with the dead and is subject to the story of Marie, and eventually to those of Silvère and Miette. In Part Two of this chapter, I come back to Freud's 'Pleasure Principle' or to the Eros and Thanatos impulses that exist in *Thérèse Raquin* in order to highlight the sadistic elements that belong to the structure of the narrative in this novel.

Le Passage du Pont-Neuf is also a frightening place, and is not 'un lieu de promenade. On le prend pour éviter un détour [...]. Toute la journée, c'est un bruit sec et pressé de pas sonnait sur la pierre avec une irrégularité irritante; personne ne parle, personne ne stationne' (*Thérèse Raquin*, p. 32). The narrator in this passage is seemingly angered by the noise the passers-by provoke with their shoes on the ground, as suggested by the phrase 'irrégularité irritante'. Arguably, the narrator does not wish to disturb the dead who are sleeping below in the 'galerie souterraine' since he identifies with them as they belong to his crypt. This would support the argument made for a 'ghost' living in the ego, one who represents 'the return of a dispossessed femininity trapped in the margins of scriptural existence'.⁴⁵ Thérèse's ghostly presence reflects this artistic description. Indeed, this narrative presents the reader with an

⁴⁵ Griffiths and Evans, (eds.), *Haunting Presences*, pp. 2-4.

obscure mystery or 'a truth beyond the truth' which is, as shown, related to a ghostly figure who roams through the narrative of both passages. It is apparent that the narrator is referring to a tomb in the first passage, but in the second one, the reader is led to speculate about what the narrator is guiding him or her into, as he or she is given an image of a sepulchre or crypt; in this passage, the feeling of being in a burial chamber is reflected by the 'souffles froids de caveau', as well as by 'les étagères gris de poussière [qui] dorment vaguement dans l'ombre' (p. 31). It is evident that the reader is given a ghostly description of Le Passage in *Thérèse Raquin* so that the reader is prepared for the drama (of death) which will follow in this novel. I come back to this point in Part Two of this chapter since the fate of Thérèse, Camille, and Laurent is linked to the theory of the phantom and to the Œdipus complex when related to unfulfilled infantile sexual development.

L'aire Saint-Mittre and Le Passage du Pont-Neuf are swallowed by a mystery. This is reflected primarily in the silence that both passages project and, as shown, in the eeriness of the descriptions of Marie's crypt and graveyard, and secondly in the dark, narrow corridor and the cold 'souffles' that emanate from the 'boutiques obscures' of Le Passage du Pont-Neuf, as well as in the prophetically ghostly profile of Thérèse who will join the dead following her suicide (pp. 31-34).

Although Véronique Cnockaert wrongly associates the well in *La Fortune des Rougon* with 'la mise en tombeau de la République', she rightly assesses, nonetheless, that Marie's tombstone 'insuffle au roman sa vérité intérieure', and maintains furthermore that 'le livre s'apparente également à une tombe', questioning who the 'défunt' is.⁴⁶ Cnockaert's argument reinforces the phantasmagorical atmosphere that is being imparted in this passage, as the words 'intérieure', 's'apparente', and 'tombe' indicate. In other words, the interior of a coffin is always dark: the dark coffin which Cnockaert is making allusion to suggests the unconscious or the repressed since it is synonymous with a dark crypt and is frightening. Cnockaert is

⁴⁶ Véronique Cnockaert, "'Speculo oratio': le puits-tombeau dans *La Fortune des Rougon* d'Émile Zola', *French Forum*, 24, 1 (1999), 47, 49.

correct as Zola reveals Marie's death through a concealed form of writing. Marie-Sophie Armstrong also remarks that *La Fortune des Rougon* has a 'scriptural value'.⁴⁷

This novel is an elegy to the dead, Marie, Miette and Silvère. Zola keeps the true origins of Marie a secret but gives the reader a clue through the cryptic inscription on Marie's tombstone. Zola is guiding the reader to Marie's secret in using the adverb 'Cy', which points to Marie's place of rest, and insisting that she is dead and forgotten: '*Cy-gist... Marie...*' (pp. 10-11). Yet, the reader is reminded that although her name on the epitaph is slowly being effaced, it is still legible. This suggests that Zola wants to keep a memory alive as the hidden clue indicates he wishes to revisit a past, the death of Marie, which he presents to the reader through the overall atmosphere of mourning. This feeling is emphasized by significant and relevant words which suggest that a traumatic experience occurred: in the first passage, the epitaph on Marie's tomb highlights a shameful past, the murder of an innocent child. This is strengthened by the word 'rongeait', translated in this passage as the tombstone being gnawed at by the moss slowly causing the name of Marie to be 'effacé' (or rubbed out) from view and eventually 'émietté'; this is a signifier for the dust that Marie's body becomes. In other words, this image might be presented as Marie's story buried and forgotten and for the narrator this is a crime. It is also probable that the crime relates to a memory which is being progressively erased emphasized by the verb 'rongeait' in the description of the tombstone's epitaph. Such erasure is strengthened by the word 'effacée', one which is significantly used in the past perfect to emphasize the past that has been forgotten. This reinforces Marie's secret, sealed however by the borders of her crypt. The borders that have been eroded by the moss do not simply signify that Marie's body is rotting away, but we could also argue that the narrator is trying to take the reader with him into the sepulchre in order to point out that a crime has been committed. The narrator reinforces Marie's mystery by insisting on the borders that entomb her coffin.

⁴⁷ Marie-Sophie Armstrong, 'The Opening Chapter of *La Fortune des Rougon*, or the Darker Side of Zolian Writing', *Dalhousie French Studies*, 44 (Fall 1998), 51.

What connects both passages to the elliptical message on Marie's tombstone or the mystery that surrounds her death is found in the phrase 'pierre tombale' in *La Fortune des Rougon* and in the words 'caveau' and 'enfant' in *Thérèse Raquin*. Both tombs are bordered with a 'lèpre [...] toute couturée de cicatrices' (*Thérèse Raquin*, p. 32), eaten by 'la mousse [qui] la rongeaient lentement' (*La Fortune des Rougon*, pp. 10-11). Marie has been forgotten; yet for the narrator her memory is 'gravé[e]' in the tombstone's epitaph.

It becomes apparent that Zola is obsessed with death, particularly with the death of innocent babies and children. The presence of dead children or babies and cemeteries is often found in the *Rougon-Macquart*. For example, Jeanne in *Une Page d'amour* dies; we have a scene, at the end of the novel, where her mother Hélène Grandjean visits her daughter's remains in the cemetery. Death and burial are also referred to in *L'Œuvre* when Claude is taken to the cemetery to be buried; in this passage the narrator distracts the reader and draws his or her attention to the location where young children and babies are also buried. The reader senses that feelings of grief and melancholy are present in the narrator's voice; the narrator seems to be affected by the sight of children's graves whilst stating that:

Il y avait là un cimetière d'enfants, rien que des tombes d'enfants, à l'infini, rangées avec ordre, régulièrement séparées par des sentiers étroits, pareilles à une ville enfantine de la mort [...]. Les croix disaient les âges: deux ans, seize mois, cinq mois. Une pauvre croix, sans entourage qui débordait et se trouvait plantée de biais dans une allée, portait simplement: Eugénie, trois jours. N'être pas encore et dormir déjà là, à part, comme les enfants que les familles, aux soirs de fêtes, font dîner à la petite table. (*L'Œuvre*, p. 360)

As for the story of Marie in *La Fortune des Rougon*, the secret that is imparted is embodied in the characterizations of Marie and Thérèse and is cryptically inscribed in the above passages. In both passages, such words point to the drama of Marie even though they have been transformed and deformed in a dialogue that is encoded with signifiers. Yet, the words 'enfant' and 'cicatrices' (*Thérèse Raquin*, pp. 31-32) can help decipher the secret because they are synonymous with the past, since it is the death of an innocent child which arguably contributed to the making of the series. The narrator goes through an inner conflict

whilst describing those passages. This is also relevant when Silvère and Miette discover Adelaïde's hidden place and violate her 'logis de l'Impasse Saint-Mittre' (*La Fortune des Rougon* p. 45). Adelaïde is traumatized when that happens and the narrator tells us that she is 'prise d'une douleur si vive' (p. 188) tearing away, by this, the scars that were healing, in the process of being brushed away, as the epitaph of Marie's tombstone suggests (p. 45).

The crime against a child and the scars that are left behind, as the epitaph indicates, are reinforced primarily by the 'coupe-gorge' effect that Le Passage du Pont-Neuf provides with its narrow corridor, as well as in the 'galerie souterraine' which is kept lit by the 'lampes funéraires' (*Thérèse Raquin* p. 33). Moreover the feeling that the death of a baby is haunting the narrator, and that he is in mourning, is substantiated by the reference to the old 'marchande [qui] sommeille au fond de son armoire, les mains cachées sous son châle' whose neighbour is Thérèse, whose name on the shop window is inscribed in red: 'L'enseigne, faite d'une planche étroite et longue, portait en lettres noires, le mot: *Mercerie*, et sur une des vitres de la porte était écrit un nom de femme: Thérèse Raquin, en caractères rouges' (*Thérèse Raquin*, p. 33). Indeed, the presence in the narrative of the colours black and red (p. 33) adds emphasis to the argument that a child is buried since both colours symbolize mourning on the one hand and blood and passion on the other, thus alluding to the 'illicit' sexual passions of Thérèse and Adelaïde. Furthermore, the feeling of being enclosed in a vault is strengthened by the phrase 'galerie souterraine', a place into which the narrator guides us as he keeps it lit with the 'lampes funéraires'. This suggests that the narrator is including the reader in his past, presenting him or her with his secret and enlightening the reader about the death of a child: 'lampes' suggests the realization of a secret since their purpose is to light up or to see, to know, and 'funéraires' indicates mourning, to know about a death. The red characters that inscribe Thérèse's name on the window of the haberdashery shop pre-empt Thérèse's sexual passion, as already explained, and symbolize the blood of her miscarried baby. I interpret below what I believe Thérèse's shop, or her 'Mercerie' (p. 33), suggest in this passage.

Zola's fiction is furthermore connected to 'vraisemblance'. In his preface to *Thérèse Raquin*, Robert Abirached also believes that the novel is set in the domain of 'vraisemblance' (*Thérèse Raquin*, p. 14). Both this novel and *La Fortune des Rougon* are framed in 'une action vraisemblable' because these novels are arguably connected to the origins of Zola's anxiety with regard to female sexuality. Besides the similarities that both opening passages project, there is also a link that exists between them, an echo, figuratively uttered by the phantom of that child to her mother. This is further supported in the beginning of the passage by the words 'jouets d'enfant' and 'caveau' (*Thérèse Raquin*, p. 31), whose juxtaposition reinforces the argument that it is a child or baby who has died and is buried, as 'caveau' further suggests. Furthermore, the 'cicatrices' are foregrounded by the 'formes lugubres', as reflected in the 'vitrages' of Le Passage du Pont-Neuf, strengthening the mourning effect of the sentence. The ghostly effect that this passage provides is further enhanced by that of Thérèse's ghostly 'appearance', as discussed above. This is reinforced by the narrator's comments that 'personne ne parle, personne ne stationne', preceded, as already shown, by his irritated comment on the noise that passers-by make 'en tapant à coups de sabots sur les dalles', subsequently awakening the dead (p. 32). This effect is heightened yet further by the woman who sleeps in her closet 'les mains cachées sous son châle' who might be said to be concealing metaphorically the death of a child (Thérèse's miscarriage) or that of her pregnancy since one purpose of wearing a shawl is to cover up, suggesting by this image that the ghost of a woman who existed in the past has been re-awakened and revisits the narrator.

Adelaïde is also represented as the mother who has 'killed' her child through her neglect and depraved sexuality. Marie's call resonates from her grave, but it is the 'muraille crépie de noire' (*Thérèse Raquin*, p. 32), or the 'masure', Adelaïde's dirty past (*La Fortune des Rougon*, p. 177), that has created the 'impasse' between Adelaïde's house and the graveyard

where Marie's crypt is located.⁴⁸ This reinforces Adelaïde's secret about her child, one which Adelaïde refuses to reveal as it 'resta hermetiquement clos et garda ses secrets' (p. 45). 'C'était, pour elle, comme un rempart infranchissable, qui murait son passé' (p. 177). It is Silvère who revives it by re-opening her 'cicatrices' so far 'couturées de noires' (*Thérèse Raquin*, p. 32).

In reviving Adelaïde's past, Silvère and Miette violate her 'masure' or expose her dirty sexual nature, since 'masure' in French denotes a dirty hole used as her home, as the narrator of *Thérèse Raquin* exposes when indirectly referring to Thérèse's sexuality; Zola uses the word 'masure' as a metaphor for Adelaïde's sexual nature and the word 'excrément' for that of Thérèse (see Part Two). Zola exposes Adelaïde's and Thérèse's nature through the metaphor of dirt or filth suggesting that their sexuality is immoral. Miette and Silvère have desecrated Adelaïde's secret; in so doing, Silvère has opened up Marie's crypt because Miette represents the dead Marie, as her name suggests (p. 176). Miette is the baby ghost that guides the narrator; Silvère and Miette have a sibling relationship (p. 45). Thus the narrator uses Silvère to remind Adelaïde of her 'crime/secret', as does the narrator of *Madeleine Férat* when he uses Geneviève to remind the reader that 'Dieu le Père n'a pas pardonné' when Madeleine dies.

Henri Mitterand suggests that the narrator is Silvère in *La Fortune des Rougon* and remarks: 'Ne dirait-on pas que le narrateur vient se confondre lui-même avec son personnage? En tête des *Rougon-Macquart*, l'homme qui erre parmi les monuments d'une société disparue, qui la tire du sommeil pour lui rendre son identité.'⁴⁹ I suggest that in the description of Marie's tomb, Zola attempts to revive a lost shadow and is giving her back her lost identity. This is reinforced when the narrator introduces Silvère into the narrative and figuratively places him over Marie's tomb and lets him think whilst waiting for Miette to appear: 'Il songeait toujours, assis sur la pierre tombale, ne sentant pas les clartés de la lune qui coulaient maintenant le long de sa poitrine et de ses jambes' (p. 12). Similarly, Silvère attempts to

⁴⁸ See note 24.

⁴⁹ As cited by Armstrong, in 'Impair et père, ou le roman invisible des "Rougon-Macquart"', p. 12.

elucidate Marie's mystery. This is reinforced in the long sentence in which Silvère questions Adelaïde: 'Le soir, Silvère, préoccupé de son aventure essaya de questionner tante Dide. Peut-être saurait-elle qui était cette Miette qui avait des yeux si noirs et une bouche si rouge' (p. 177). Adelaïde, on the other hand, refuses to tell him who Miette is: 'Tante Dide n'avait plus jeté un coup-d'oeil [...] c'était pour elle un rempart infranchissable qui murait son passé', and, 'elle avait enterré son amour, son cœur et sa chair' (p. 177). Since I am proposing that Marie is Adelaïde's dead daughter and her spirit is embodied in Miette, 'chair' suggests that Marie is part of her flesh and blood. Adelaïde wants to forget what happened to the baby, the issue of her and her lover Macquart; she allows her past, with regard to the dead Marie, to rot as the narrator implies, since for him Adelaïde allowed her secret to 'pourrir', but keeps it as a 'relique du passé', one which Silvère is conscious of (p. 187). However, her past is re-visited when she sees Miette, or the ghost of her child Marie who is buried very near, behind the cemetery as the narrative suggests: 'La grand-mère était venue par hasard au puits. En apercevant, dans la vieille muraille noire, la trouée blanche de la porte que Silvère avait ouverte toute grande, elle reçut au cœur un coup violent. Cette trouée blanche lui semblait un abîme de lumière *creusée brutalement dans le passé*' (p. 188, my emphasis). As suggested, Marie is Adelaïde's daughter as she returns from the dead to haunt her 'mother'; indeed, words like 'abîme' and 'creusée' point to the crypt which connects to the past, as in 'passé', implying by these words that a death has happened in the past. Furthermore, we are presented, in this scene, with an echo of the painting of the Resurrection of Christ through the phrases 'tombe ouverte' and 'linceul [...] enseveli' (p. 189). This image emphasizes the supernatural, spiritual, and virginal nature of Marie (and that of Silvère since he will also be sacrificed for the sins of mankind), and reinforces as well the theory proposed on Zola's belief in Spiritism, see above, p. 53. In this passage the narrator is complicit with Silvère as through this religious metaphor he reminds his character, Adelaïde, that through her implied sexual deviousness Marie has died but has 'redeemed' Adelaïde's crime through her sacrifice, by

representing the secret that Adelaïde kept. For Kate Griffiths, Zola's 'ghosts return from beyond the grave' because they help him evaluate his 'own artistic act'.⁵⁰ Indeed, Zola brings back Marie/Miette from beyond the grave not simply to evaluate his artistic act, but also to 'consciously' explore, through this form, the ways in which he is haunted by his secret.

1.4 The Relationship between Miette and Silvère

In *La Fortune des Rougon*, we are told that Miette and Silvère have a strong bond and that their love is more that of sibling than of lovers; when he sees her he is 'attendri d'une tendresse fraternelle' (p. 14), and kisses her as does a brother, 'en frère' (p. 16). Considering the approach to expressing his secrets through a cryptic language, Zola is arguably thinking of the ways in which he can extricate his story from the past; sitting on Marie's tombstone, the narrator suggests that Silvère was thinking of Miette: 'Silvère songeait toujours assis sur la pierre tombale' (p. 12). It is Marie's ghost in the form of Miette that arrives and awakens him from his dreams. The narrator tells us that the cemetery is familiar to her: 'L'enfant avait une agilité singulière' which pertains to her or to the dead, as their ghost is ethereal and not concrete, hence the noun 'agilité'. Miette has a particular agility; she has the immanent quality of a spirit and the graveyard is familiar to her: 'cet étrange chemin lui devait être familier' (p. 13). Arguably, the narrator could have continued with the sentence and explained, for example, that the reason why the graveyard is familiar to her is because she is already dead — Zola stops short of going further; he wishes to keep Marie's secret as a mystery for the reader, if it went further it would not support his naturalist project.

Marie is the ghost who returns to assist the narrator in dealing with the secret; she is indeed cold in her coffin given that the reference to 'les vieux morts' (p. 17) is at once followed in the same passage by Miette's feeling of cold: 'J'ai bien froid, dit-elle, en remettant le capuchon de sa pelisse'. Furthermore, when Silvère is sitting on the tombstone waiting for Miette to appear, the narrator tells the reader that Silvère hears Miette's voice as one that

⁵⁰ Griffiths and Evans (eds.), *Haunting Presences*, pp. 3 and 4.

sounds 'légère, comme un souffle, basse et haletante' (p. 13): Silvère is indeed talking to the ghost of Marie. She is undeniably cold, and she comes out of her crypt to meet Silvère, her brother. In addition, the sibling bond that exists between them is strengthened when Miette wraps her 'pelisse' around Silvère and herself. The narrator is reviving in this scene the image of Marie; his wish is to become one with the lost person. This is reinforced when the narrator tells us that the pelisse was:

[P]iquée à petits losanges et doublée d'une indienne rouge sang: puis elle [Miette] jeta un pan de ce chaud et large manteau sur les épaules de Silvère, l'enveloppant ainsi tout entier, le mettant avec elle, serré contre elle dans le même vêtement pour n'en faire qu'un. Quand ils furent ainsi confondus en un seul être [...], ils se mirent à marcher à petits pas. (*La Fortune des Rougon*, p. 17)

The 'pelisse' suggests the womb and the reference to 'rouge sang' implies the blood that surrounds the womb since the function of the pelisse is to blend or merge both children into one where they are 'enfouis dans la pelisse au point de perdre toute forme humaine'. This strengthens the sibling link that exists between Silvère and Miette and reinforces as well the spectral aspect of this passage. Hannah Thompson argues that this novel is the 'beginning of the story of the role assigned to the items of clothing in the playing out of this drama.'⁵¹ For her, the pelisse acts as an item of clothing 'which conceals and disguises any kind of physical affection that Miette and Silvère have', and that 'the dependence of the pelisse elevates them to a necessary part of their relations, the means by which their mutual desire is aroused.' Thompson also remarks that 'through (the pelisse) their relationship is inverted with subversive erotic significance' (p. 2). Thompson's interpretation is valid, but her argument regarding the role of the pelisse could be stronger had she remarked that the narrator refers to their relationship as brother and sister as in the references to Silvère's 'tendresse fraternelle', to the kisses that he gives her 'en frère' and to Silvère referring to himself as Miette's brother: 'je suis ton frère' (p. 167). The argument for the sibling relationship existing

⁵¹ Hannah Thompson, *Naturalism Redressed: Identity and Clothing in the Novels of Emile Zola* (Oxford: Legenda, 2004), p. 2.

between both characters is furthermore enhanced by the well that abuts Miette's house in Le Jas-Meiffren.

The reflection of Miette and Silvère's mirror images in the well fuses their relationship as brother and sister: Marie's ghost is reflected in Miette's image in the well. This is substantiated by the water in the well undulating and moving, reinforcing by this the rippling effect of the ethereal image that belongs to the fragile ghostly nature of Marie/Miette, as the narrator implies in this passage: 'Et à mesure que les rides de l'eau s'élargissaient et se mouraient, il vit l'apparition se reformer. Elle oscilla longtemps dans un balancement qui donna à ses traits une grâce vague de fantôme' (p. 180). Miette and Silvère's relationship as brother and sister is further emphasized. This is strengthened by the echo that their discussion provides through the well (pp. 179- 181). Véronique Cnockaert remarks that Zola 'joue à cache-cache entre l'ombre et la lumière' with the reader whilst referring to the well in *La Fortune des Rougon*; her argument is particularly relevant to the scene in which Miette and Silvère have a conversation but are not able to view one another owing to the wall that separates them. She associates it with the 'dénouement terrible et nécessaire' of this novel and 'la mise en tombeau de la République'.⁵² For my part, the narrator uses the wall of the well as a symbol for the darkness that engulfs Marie's crypt.

With regard to Zola representing the secret of Marie in *La Fortune des Rougon*, Jean Borie rightly argues that there exists in this novel 'la présence d'une problématique'.⁵³ Arguably, Zola deals with the denouement of Marie's sad story and later with that of Thérèse's frightening one as both are necessary to the beginning of the process of catharsis since they belong to the repressed. The difficulty the reader encounters in Zola's fiction lies in the ways in which the novelist represents female sexuality: Madeleine, Renée, Albine, Gervaise, Nana, and Séverine all die for rebelling against nineteenth-century patriarchal dictates on female sexuality (Zola's characteristic representation of female sexuality in nineteenth-century France

⁵² Cnockaert, "'Speculo oratio': le puits-tombeau dans *La Fortune des Rougon* d'Émile Zola', p. 47.

⁵³ Borie, *Zola et les mythes*, p. 12.

is further analysed in Chapter Four). However, Adelaïde and Thérèse are the first female characters to cause the narrator's neurosis and anxiety, and by so doing unsettle and alarm him further.

The description of the opening passages, and the way in which the scenes are illustrated in both, act as mnemonics, as they both reflect 'le souvenir d'une scene traumatique précoce, mise hors circuit, encryptée'.⁵⁴ Even Miette has been traumatized by her father's scandal. This is illustrated when she tells Silvère: 'Alors je voudrais être morte... Je pense à celui que tu sais...' (p. 20). Silvère tells her that she is not to blame since it is not her crime, 'ce n'est pas ton crime.'

⁵⁴ Abraham and Torok, *Le Verbier de l'homme aux loups*, p. 79.

Part Two: *Thérèse Raquin* and *Madeleine Férat*

I have already demonstrated in Part One to what extent the first part of *La Fortune des Rougon* highlights a mystery related to a secret about a dead relative that exists in the narrator's ego. In this part, I show that there is a link between the theory of the phantom and the Œdipus complex. This is found in the dual unity that both theories project: both emerge from the repressed as both react to trauma. This part examines to what degree the narrator's dislike for Thérèse, and subsequently for Laurent, and his resentment and jealousy towards them are related to the narrator's anxiety. It proposes that the traumatic experience of losing a parent, and other traumatic situations that would have resulted from such loss, can contribute to sublimation of unfulfilled desires. In this novel, this is symbolized in the representation of guilt, desire, resentment, and death.

Norman Brown observes:

The infantile organization of the libido, pre-genital and genital, sustains, the human neurosis; they are the bodily counterpart of the disorder in the human mind.

For Freud, the adult is unconsciously striving to achieve infantile, oral, anal or genital ambitions and this process results in sublimation. If, however, infantile sexuality is disturbed by instinctual ambivalence (the birth-trauma and the castration complex) from a very early stage, five years onwards, its characteristic manifestations (oral, anal and phallic) are not simply projected as the creation of Eros, but also of Eros's instinctual antagonists. This leads to anxiety which produces repression; instinctual ambivalence causes repression. Finally anxiety and instinctual ambivalence relate to the death drive.⁵⁵

As Brown suggests, anxiety that occurs in an early stage of infantile sexuality may direct its course towards insecurity and neurosis in adulthood.⁵⁶ For Freud, 'if infantile organization of the libido (pre-genital and genital) is not adequately fulfilled, the child may be neurotic in his or her later life'.⁵⁷ In these novels, neurosis is projected through feelings of resentment and jealousy.

⁵⁵ Norman O. Brown, *Life against Death: The Psychoanalytical Meaning of History*, 2nd edn (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1985), pp. 110-11. See also Brink, *The Creative Matrix*, p. 4.

⁵⁶ Brown, *Life Against Death*, p. 111.

⁵⁷ Brown quotes Freud in *Life Against Death*, p. 112.

Borie highlights Zola's neurosis as 'un sentiment d'exclusion caché sous le désir [...] de se guérir sous le besoin de guérir les autres.'⁵⁸ It is true that Zola focuses on his characters' neurosis, concentrating nonetheless on women's sexual *tempéraments*; this argument is particularly valid for Thérèse's character and is illustrated through the stream of consciousness which the narrator presents in reflecting her thoughts. Yet, behind this technique Zola's own neurosis is projected. This is illustrated in the jealousy and the resentment which the narrator manifests in terms of the love affair that exists between Thérèse and Laurent. This, in turn highlights an immaturity which is the result of the unfulfilled organization of the libido (the sustained neurosis regarding female sexuality) and is reflected in the narrator's anxiety regarding the behaviour of his (female) characters. Arguably, the narrator's instinctual ambivalences have been disturbed through repression and through mourning, owing to parental loss and through jealousy regarding the maternal; this is illustrated in the sadistic game he plays with his characters in intruding into their lives and punishing them for disturbing his psychic libidinal development. This conflict represents the unsuccessful progress from the oral to the anal and on to the phallic stages, especially the progress to the phallic stage, since it is assumed that the child/boy would not be passing through this stage having lost his paternal figure. As theorized by Freud in the *Pleasure Principle*, the boy needs to identify with a male figure in order to detach himself later from the maternal (see Chapter Three). Rather than effecting the creation of Eros, or libido, which according to Brown is a natural process in infantile sexuality, the narrator's Eros becomes antagonistic towards itself in these novels, thereby exerting sadomasochistic traits which result in the death drive. Undeniably, these novels highlight a conflict between pleasure and death, one in which the narrator takes 'pleasure' in representing and describing the subsequent death of Thérèse, Laurent, and Madeleine.

⁵⁸ Borie, *Zola et les mythes*, p. 12.

An immature narrator is present in these novels whose character projects sadomasochistic traits in relation to the maternal and to sexuality whilst recounting the stories. He manifests characteristics which correspond to undeveloped anal and phallic stages. This contributes to the dark, sinister, and spectral nature of the novels. Death is a salient feature in *Thérèse Raquin* since it returns to haunt the lovers. The ghostly effect of Thérèse's profile which the narrative presented earlier is also mirrored in the sexual insecurity that the narrator reflects. This is because infantile sexual development has been unsuccessful; it returns in this narrative as a 'spectral related process', to coin a new phrase, one which functions as sadomasochistic fantasies.⁵⁹ The description of Thérèse's ghostly presence in the first part of this novel indicates that we are dealing with the past which manifests itself in the present during the narrated scenes of the Raquin's family 'drama' and relates to: a) the return of Thérèse, b) the introduction of an intruder, c) the murder of Camille, and d) to sexuality, to betrayal, and to death. All are connected with Thérèse's ghost who returns in this novel to haunt the narrator.⁶⁰

The memory of a sombre event is characterized by the labyrinthine nature of *Le Passage du Pont-Neuf*: the 'galerie souterraine' where Thérèse's ghostly appearance makes itself present is surrounded by the 'muraille noire de crasse' and by 'La marchande [qui] sommeille au fond de son armoire, les mains cachées sous son châle' (p. 33). As discussed, Thérèse's first appearance is as a ghost-like figure and is furthermore related to the image of a woman sleeping in the closet. These two scenes support the argument made above in that their significance is related to the female phantom who haunts the narrator. The shopkeeper's space in the narrative is positioned next to the 'galerie souterraine' which is lit by the 'lampes funéraires' (p. 33). This suggests that the spectre of a woman, the old 'marchande' is haunting

⁵⁹ See Brink, *The Creative Matrix*.

⁶⁰ There is an obvious parallel with Freud's death drive. See Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality: The Sexual Abberations, the Sexual Instinct in Neurotics*, trans. by James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1964).

the narrator by her presence in the narrative and by the words 'sommeille', 'fond', and 'armoire'. Arguably, these words are linked to the crypt since together they prophecy death. This point is important since it indicates the return of the repressed in Zola's language, particularly in this passage.

The reader is at once given a dark and dirty side of Thérèse's character. As well as her spectral presence at the beginning of the novel, her sexuality is also juxtaposed with the description of the 'étroit' and 'sombre [...] corridor' of Le Passage du Pont-Neuf because it is in this 'location' that her passionate sexual nature leads to murder, betrayal, and death, as the metaphorical message of the image of the black wall 'grossièrement crépie et toute couverte de cicatrices' conveys (*Thérèse Raquin*, pp. 32-33). Naomi Schor identifies Zola's representation of the female sexual organ as a dark continent.⁶¹ Schor is right, but Zola's representation is furthermore linked to dirt, to mental and sexual illness, and to disease as the dark image of the black wall suggests.

This image that the narrator projects in the description of Le Passage du Pont-Neuf identifies issues related to the sexual act. Zola's anxiety about the sexual act is mirrored in the narrator's depiction of some areas of the passage. For example, the corridor's description as 'étroit et sombre' and 'noir de crasse' arguably evokes a disgust for the sexual act, or the female sexual organ, as depicted by the corridor's filthy and dirty state; this corridor is described as measuring 'trente pas de long et deux pas de large au-plus' and is 'pavé de [...] dalles jaunâtres suant une humidité âcre.' It is noticeable that the phrase 'deux pas de large au-plus' is stressed, implying the anatomical description of the vagina and possibly that of the rectum as its narrowness suggests. The olfactory characteristic that this passage provides is found in the present participle 'suant'. This image is also connected to an excremental one since it is linked to sexuality. The allusion to smell is reproduced in *Nana* when the narrator

⁶¹ Naomi Schor, 'Smiles of the Sphinx: Zola and the Riddle of Femininity', in *Breaking the Chain: Women, Theory and French Realist Fiction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), p. 29.

and Muffat go through another olfactory experience whilst visiting Nana and her friends in the *coulisses* of the Théâtre des Variétés. In Chapter Four I discuss this point further.

Borie argues that the image of Le Passage du Pont-Neuf is related to the 'fêlure'.⁶² *Fêlure* is a term for a crack and may be arguably connected to the vagina and to the anus in this instance since the vision of excrement is related to Thérèse's sexuality; this is particularly valid for the scene where Laurent crosses Le Passage du Pont-Neuf in order to meet Thérèse. The phantom's return is reflected in the onomatopœic effect that related words provide in this passage as in the words: 'passage', 'voluptés', 'heurt' and brûlure', thus reinforcing the argument for Abraham and Torok's theory of the phantom and Freud's theory of the œdipal process working together as a dual unity. The following passages show to what extent Zola's anxieties about sexuality are reflected as spectral:

Dès l'entrée du passage, il éprouva des voluptés cuisantes. [...]; il monta l'escalier étroit et obscur, en s'appuyant aux murs gras d'humidité. [...]; au bruit de chaque heurt, il sentait une brûlure qui lui traversait la poitrine. (*Thérèse Raquin*, p. 72)

[E]t, dans la chambre nue et glaciale, se passaient des scènes de passion ardentes, d'une brutalité sinistre. (*Ibid.* p. 77)

Anxiety, when related to the sexual act is arguably mirrored in the phrase's sexual connotation: the 'voluptés cuisantes' which Laurent feels; the 'heurt' and 'brûlure' which pass through his chest as well as in the 'scènes de passion ardentes' and the 'brutalité sinistre' that the sexual act provides as suggested in this passage, indicate that there is a connection between pleasure and pain. For example, the corridor's dark and narrow nature arguably represents the anus, as the passage's 'étroit' and 'noir de crasse' areas show. As discussed above, it is likely that Zola's neurosis regarding sexuality is related to the sexual act, but if so, it then becomes significant since it is connected with the œdipal period of infantile sexuality. In Chapter Six, I revisit this passage in the text of *Thérèse Raquin* and relate it to Zéphirin's sexual

⁶² Borie, *Zola et les mythes*, p. 38.

assault and murder and suggest that there may be a connection between Zéphirin's assault and personal trauma.

2.1 Separation as a Form of Anxiety

Symptoms of an unfulfilled sexual development are manifest in this novel. Apart from sexual insecurities and inhibitions, the narrator also projects feelings with regard to the relationship with the maternal. As suggested, the narrator's damaged ego might be linked to his inability to accept separation. From this separation follows a love-hate relationship between narrator and characters. The resemblance between the narrative's plot and M. Zola's death is interesting since it highlights a process of mourning.⁶³ This is illustrated through the representation of the return of Camille's ghost who haunts Thérèse and Laurent. I suggest that the loss of the novelist's father and his alleged replacement by Marius Daime (a friend of the family who helped Emilie Zola, the novelist's mother) may contribute to these novels' plots as they both impart resentment and jealousy towards the intruder as illustrated by Laurent's wound which does not heal (*Thérèse Raquin*, p. 193). This symbolizes the inability to accept the loss and reflects a state of continuous mourning for the deceased. This feeling is also present in *Une Page d'amour* when Jeanne, Hélène Grandjean's daughter, is jealous of Docteur Deberle and M. Rambaud, and manifests sadistic traits in her behaviour towards her mother (*Une page d'amour*, pp. 876-78).

In his need to control his characters' behaviour, the narrator establishes a relationship between him and his characters. This is reflected when the narrator imposes himself upon Thérèse and Laurent and disturbs their marital 'peace' by re-introducing a haunting aspect into the narrative, the ghost of Camille. This method of introducing the dead helps fulfil sublimation, and also reinforces the characters' guilt:

⁶³ See Mitterand, *Zola*, I.

Le cadavre qui hantait déjà la maison, y fut introduit ouvertement [...] Laurent ne pouvait toucher à n'importe quoi sans que Thérèse lui fit sentir que Camille avait touché cela avant lui. Il s'imagina qu'il était Camille, qu'il s'identifiait avec sa victime. (*Thérèse Raquin*, p. 205)

Thérèse is party to the guilty feeling that Laurent feels. It is because she is feeling guilty that she resents Laurent's touch:

Laurent songeait parfois à prendre violemment Thérèse dans ses bras; mais il n'osait bouger, il se disait qu'il ne pouvait allonger la main sans saisir une poignée de la chair molle de Camille. Il pensait alors que le noyé venait se coucher entre eux, pour les empêcher de s'étreindre. Il finit par comprendre que le noyé était jaloux. (*Thérèse Raquin*, p. 205)

Through this show of resentment and jealousy, the ghost returns from the dead because the narrator identifies with him in replacing the son's relationship with that of the mother, and hostility towards the intruder becomes more distinctive as forbidden desire towards the maternal becomes more intense. Zola makes use of this sadistic method to reinforce guilt. There is indeed a transference that passes between Thérèse's guilt and the narrator's resentment towards her: she submits to his sadistic game in heightening Laurent's guilt (as well as her own). The drive to control characters leads to neurosis and anxiety with regard to the maternal. This represents the need to replace the paternal in order to control the chaos which pervades the narratives. We could argue that the cat whose name is François recalls the deceased M. Zola, and its proximity to the narrative symbolizes the ghost of Camille. We could also argue that there is a similarity in the symbolic message or imagery that the cat in this novel provides with that of the black cat in Edgar Allan Poe's *The Black Cat* (1843) who returns to haunt the protagonist for having killed 'him'.

2.2 The Death Drive

As shown, there is a connection between anxiety and the death instinct. This instinct is also related to pleasure in these novels; the pleasure of both seeing death and achieving coitus. Both instincts are linked to sexuality in both novels. In *Thérèse Raquin*, this is perceived when Laurent visits the morgue in search of Camille's body, as well as in Madame Raquin enjoying seeing the bodies of Thérèse and Laurent: 'les cadavres restèrent toute la nuit sur le carreau de la salle à manger [...]. Et, [...] Mme Raquin, roide et muette, les contempla [...], ne pouvant se rassasier les yeux, les écrasant de regards lourds' (p. 301).

When Laurent visits the morgue and sees the naked bodies of dead women he has 'des frissons qui le faisaient haleter' (*Thérèse Raquin*, p. 126). Laurent's pleasure at seeing naked female dead bodies represents necrophilia, a sexual attraction to dead bodies, in this case dead women:

Il prenait un plaisir étrange à regarder la mort violente en face [...]. Ce spectacle l'amusait, surtout lorsqu'il y avait des femmes étalant leur gorge nue. Ces nudités brutalement étendues, tachées de sang, trouées par endroit, l'attiraient et le retenaient. Il vit, une fois, une jeune femme de vingt ans, [...] elle souriait à demi, [...] et tendait la poitrine d'une façon provocante'. (*Thérèse Raquin*, p. 126)

The words 'plaisir', 'mort', 'nudités', and the phrases 'tachées de sang', and 'façon provocante', point to the sadomasochistic pleasure which the narrator enjoys. He takes pleasure in imagining, or in reporting Laurent's sadistic pleasure when confronted with dead female bodies and, at this point in the narrative, is complicit with his male character. The *pleasurable* death instinct is also perceived in *Madeleine Férat* when Madeleine poisons herself. Once again, the narrator, like Guillaume, enjoys the sight of Madeleine's lifeless body in reporting his protagonist's feelings; this reflected when Guillaume takes pleasure at the sight of his wife's dead body:

Lorsqu'elle tomba avec un bruit sourd [...] il sentit le parquet trembler sous lui; [...]. Pendant quelques secondes il regarda le cadavre [...]. Puis il poussa un éclat de rire

déchirant, [...] en frappant l'une contre l'autre ses mains humides de sang, dont il examinait les taches rouges avec des accès nerveux de gaieté [...]. Il vint enfin sauter à pieds joints par-dessus le corps de sa femme, ainsi qu'un enfant qui jouerait à saute-mouton. (*Madeleine Férat*, p. 368)

Max Nordau, author of *Dégénération* (1892), believed that Zola's fiction belonged to the 'littérature putride' and was the result of degeneration and hysteria. Nordau saw Zola's work as contempt for traditional views of custom and morality, decadence and a wilful rejection of moral boundaries.⁶⁴ For Nordau, Zola and other authors (Charles Baudelaire and Gustave Moreau for example) produced pathological art which, for him, reflected 'advanced degeneracy'.⁶⁵

2.3 Voyeurism as Part of Infantile Sexual Development

Unlike Thérèse's ghostly profile at the beginning of the novel, Madeleine's character is given an immediate and positive representation. This means that the obsessions of Guillaume and the narrator with their object of desire are apparent. Indeed, the narrator forms a narcissistic identification with Guillaume; this strengthens the Œdipus complex towards the maternal since both manifest anxiety symptoms and both have lost parents, as indicated in the following passage:

Guillaume, debout, à quelques pas d'elle, l'examinait, pris de malaise. Il sentait qu'un abîme se creusait à chaque instant entre elle et lui [...] Il souffrait de n'être pas tout pour cette femme. Il se disait avec une secrète frayeur, qu'elle avait vécu vingt ans sans lui. Ces vingt années lui paraissaient d'un noir terrible. (*Madeleine Férat*, p. 38)

The symbolic adaptation of traumatic events in this novel is further depicted in Chapter Five of the book when Guillaume proposes to Madeleine. In order to seek attention, Guillaume exhibits symptoms which strengthen the feelings of anxiety and insecurity as a child

⁶⁴ See Vernon Rosario, *The Erotic Imagination: French Histories of Perversity* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 136-37. See also, Richard von Krafft-Ebbing, *Psychopathia sexualis*, trans. by Emile Laurent (Paris: George Carré, 1895); Otto Rank, *The Incest Theme in Literature and Legend: Fundamentals of a Psychology of Literary Creativity* (Baltimore, MD, and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992)

⁶⁵ Ibid.

would; he tells Madeleine: 'Si tu savais combien j'ai besoin de ton affection! Toi seule m'as calmé, toi seule m'as ouvert un refuge dans tes bras' (p. 143), 'Je voudrais m'endormir sur ton sein et ne m'éveiller jamais' (p. 144). The narrator is conveying here a foetal image, one which projects a feeling of security; this is reflected when he stresses that Guillaume 'aimait à poser la tête sur son sein, à écouter les battements réguliers de son cœur [...]. C'étaient ces battements qui réglaient sa vie [...]. La jeune femme l'avait absorbé ; elle le portait en elle maintenant [...]. C'était une pénétration complète de chair et de cœur' (p. 154). Guillaume's mother deserted him, after having had an affair with his father M. de Viargue: '[u]n beau matin, elle retourna chez son mari, en ayant soin d'oublier son enfant' (p. 75), his father treats him with 'une parfaite indifférence' (p. 76). Similarly, Serge in *La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret* manifests the same neurosis with regard to the Virgin Mary and to Albine as the following chapter will discuss.

Previously, Guillaume had shown symptoms of a wish to re-enter the womb; this is reflected through the present participle 'baisant', and the noun 'pénétration', as his wish is to 'trouver une créature qui le prendrait dans ses bras et qui l'emporterait en le baisant comme un enfant' (p. 91). But Guillaume is jealous of Jacques, his old friend and a father figure to him, and the resentment and jealousy towards an intruder occurs once again, but the novel shows less antagonism than *Thérèse Raquin*.

Sexual inhibitions and perversions which Guillaume expresses are detected in both character and narratorial observations of Madeleine. These are depicted in the mental undressing of Madeleine when Guillaume is looking at her inner nudity as a voyeur:

Plus haut, le peignoir s'écartait encore, montrant la gorge que la chemise ouverte cachait à peine [...]; on eût dit qu'elle ignorait sa nudité et qu'elle ne sentait pas sur sa peau les caresses cuisantes du feu. Lorsque ses regards s'égarèrent plus-bas, sur la poitrine et sur les jambes nues, il y regardait danser la lueur jaune du foyer avec effroi. (*Madeleine Férat*, pp. 208-09)

This indicates a wish for sexual contact with the mother/Madeleine through a voyeuristic effect; but the narrator knows it is a forbidden desire. Indeed, his viewpoint (and that of

Guillaume as reflected by the *discours indirect libre*) is that this act is considered ‘avec effroi’ suggesting fright or fear of incest with the mother figure. The mental undressing of Madeleine reinforces effectively Guillaume and the narrator’s object of desire and their voyeurism.

Freud describes voyeurism as a symptom of scopophilia and exhibitionism. These mental illnesses represent for Freud the eye, which for him represents ‘the constitutional root of the sexual instinct and which corresponds to the child’s libidinal impulses’.⁶⁶ The love for the father figure (who is departed), but who in the narrator’s perceptions represents God, turns against that figure; this highlights the inability to mourn: ‘L’ancienne liaison de sa femme [with Jacques] avec celui qu’il avait regardé comme un Dieu dans sa jeunesse, lui semblait une de ces grandes ignominies dont l’horreur confond la raison humaine. Il voyait là un inceste, un sacrilège’ (*Madeleine Férat*, p. 212). This suggests that Guillaume and the narrator do not want to share the mother figure with that of the father.⁶⁷

Thérèse Raquin and *Madeleine Férat* reveal deep jealousy and resentment towards Laurent and Jacques. These characteristics are central to their creation as they belong to the realm of the phantom and to that of infantile libidinal organization. For Zola, it is his inner ‘moi’ which travels to the outer ‘moi’, the voice of his narrator, which governs the unconscious.⁶⁸ I have shown in this chapter how ‘phantoms’ permeate the narratives and how trauma manifests itself. In Chapter Three, I show that Zola is still haunted by the female phantom who exists in his ego. I explain that in *La Faute de l’Abbé Mouret* and in *La Bête humaine* Serge and Jacques inherit traits of Adelaïde’s and Thérèse’s madness which in turn affects both in their mental capacities to judge. I argue in this chapter that Serge and Jacques re-enter an infantile sexuality, because of the ways in which the female ancestor’s ‘fêlure’

⁶⁶ Freud argues that the ‘child’s lips behave like an autoerotic zone, and no doubt stimulation of the warm flow of milk is the cause of pleasurable sensation [...] the dysphasic choice of object occurs in two waves: The first one between the age of two and five, and the second one at puberty. This determines the final outcome of sexual life’, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, pp. 28, 62-63.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ See note 4.

affects them both in their psychic development. In order to fulfil the repressed drive-wishes or undeveloped libidinal impulses, they replenish these through dreams.

Chapter Three

The Function of Dreams in *La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret* and *La Bête humaine*

Zola's notion of heredity also applies to Serge in *La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret* and to Jacques in *La Bête humaine*. Given their ancestral ties to Adelaïde, Serge and Jacques suffer from psychosis related to anxiety and trauma which they inherit from Adelaïde's 'crime'.¹ This is silently transmitted to the protagonists because they inherit her undisclosed secret which disturbs their lives.² As a result, Serge and Jacques manifest an undeveloped sexuality. In this chapter, I show that Serge's and Jacques's psychosis originates from disorganized infantile libido owing to the lack of nurturing by their mothers. Due to their unresolved sexual conflicts, they unconsciously express a return to an infantile sexuality. In order to do so, Serge and Jacques go through a process of dreams which in turn help fulfil or gratify a repressed sexuality; this happens when they are faced with women.

This chapter argues that the principal trauma which affected Serge and Jacques and which contributes to their psychosis is related to maternal neglect, which in turn led to the death of innocent children, as suggested in Chapter Two. I emphasize the lack of a maternal bond in these novels and link its causes to Adelaïde's and Thérèse's maternal neglect. I show that Serge's and Jacques's symptoms spring from their ancestor's secret, which in turn is transmitted as psychic conflicts related to sexuality. This analysis traces Serge's and Jacques's trauma and connects it to Nicolas Abraham's theory of the phantom, to Sigmund Freud's theory of infantile sexuality and the interpretation of dreams, and to Jacques Lacan's theory of the unconscious. All three theories are used in this analysis to identify paranoiac and psychotic disorders related to sexuality in Serge and Jacques.

¹ Psychosis is believed to originate in some patients from sexually related trauma. See Gabbard and others (eds.), *Oxford Textbook of Psychotherapy* p. 165.

² Abraham and Torok propose that our psychic mechanism inherits an infinite set of charged repressions which are transmitted through a pathogenic process of symptoms formation. See Abraham and Torok, 'Notes du séminaire sur l'unité duelle et le fantôme', in *L'Écorce et le noyau*, pp. 393-425.

This chapter is divided into two parts: the first examines the dream at the symbolic level. The second demonstrates that having passed the first two necessary steps of infantile sexuality, the oral and the anal stages (thus satisfying their libidinal impulses), the protagonists awaken from their dream and begin the process of individuation or alienation from the maternal at the cost of sacrificing their object of desire.

Part 1 The Hallucinatory Phase of Dream Formation

In examining the link between dreams and mental illness, Sigmund Freud remarks that there is a ‘relationship between dreams and psychoses, analogy indicating essential similarities’.³ Freud observes that dreams are the ‘products of our own psychical activities’; they are the products of ‘modification brought about by psychical process in the dream.’ He remarks, moreover, that our ‘psyche thinks and imagines in verbal images and languages when awake; in dreams it imagines in real sensory images. Dreams hallucinate,’ Freud argues; they ‘replace thoughts with hallucinations’.⁴ In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud also refers to Sante De Sanctis’s observations on paranoiacs and remarks that, according to De Sanctis, ‘in individual cases, the dream was “la vraie cause déterminante de la folie”’.⁵ The analogy between dreams and madness is further highlighted by Immanuel Kant who believes that the ‘lunatic dreams while awake’.⁶ Equally, in relating dreams to memory, Stanley Palombo also remarks that ‘dream formations are drive-wishes that are activated by impulses and initiated by a repressed memory’.⁷ In the same passage, Palombo observes that the ‘neurotic patient responds to an intra-psychic wish program [which is] activated by a reconstruction of memory’. This analysis examines to what extent Freud’s and Palombo’s observations on the concepts of dreams are relevant to Serge’s and Jacques’s behaviour in relation to their inhibited sexuality.

Plots equate to dream formation in these novels; their hallucinatory aspects in respect of Serge’s and Jacques’s delusions are reinforced by the narratives’ cinematographic potential, one which translates as a sequence of images that express ideas through their rapid motion, or through what Freud calls ‘rapid flight of ideas’.⁸ Serge and Jacques suffer from psychotic and anxious dispositions; this inherited illness is characterized by paranoiac and neurotic

³ Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. by Joyce Crick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 74.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

⁶ Immanuel Kant, quoted by Freud in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, p. 75.

⁷ Stanley Palombo, *Dreaming and Memory: A New Information Processing Model* (New York: Basic Books, 1978), p. 6.

⁸ Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, p. 77.

symptoms. However, they are unaware of their illness; this analysis relates their illness to Adelaïde's 'fêlure'.

Gilles Deleuze links the ancestral 'fêlure' to Freud's death-drive; he calls this 'la grande hérédité'.⁹ According to him Zola's hereditary 'fêlure' rests on the paradox which this hereditary illness brings to its victims: 'Tout repose sur le paradoxe de cette hérédité [the fêlure] ou de cette transmission qui ne transmet autre chose qu'elle-même' (p. 7). For Deleuze this is related to the death instinct, 'l'instinct de la mort' (p. 8) and is particularly present in Jacques. For Larry Duffy, the death instinct is related to the 'thermodynamic equivalence of the novel' especially when related to La Lison, the train, a female-named machine in *La Bête humaine*.¹⁰ Duffy shows that in *La Bête humaine* the inherited 'fêlure' contributes to a loss of equilibrium in the male protagonist. This is relevant to the analysis of Serge as well, in that it is due to his inherited disease that Serge also suffers the consequences of Adelaïde's sexual transgression. The novel's 'thermodynamic' nature is reinforced by Serge's interdependence on the Virgin Mary, Le Paradou, and Albine which helps him fulfil his undeveloped sexuality. This is evident, as well, in the link that exists between Jacques's sexuality, his train La Lison, and Séverine. I shall develop Duffy's theory of the novel's thermodynamic energy further when I examine Jacques's psychosis.

Serge's and Jacques's psychosis re-activates a repressed memory as soon as these characters are confronted with women. Indeed, Jacques's and Serge's psyches imagine in real sensory terms when confronted with female sexuality. For example, Serge, in *La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret* believes that he is having a real dialogue with the Virgin Mary after encountering Albine. Serge's dream is reflected in his hallucination with regards to the female reproductive organ; this is emphasized during his discourse with the Virgin Mary as well as when he finds himself in Le Paradou and believes he has returned to childhood. Likewise, in *La*

⁹ Gilles Deleuze, 'Zola et la fêlure', in *Logique du Sens* (1969), 7-24, (p. 7).

¹⁰ Larry Duffy, *Beyond The Pressure Principle: A Thermodynamic Investigation of the Death Instinct in La Bête humaine*, <http://mlpa.nottingham.ac.uk/archive/00000016/01/FdS_Duffy.pdf> [accessed May 2014].

Bête humaine Jacques believes he is dreaming or hallucinating when he sees La Lison, the train, follow its rapid course whilst Roubaud and Séverine murder Grandmorin (p. 1047). For both protagonists these events determine how their sexuality will evolve. Jacques's beast within, or his desire to murder women, is re-awakened when he sees Séverine plunging the knife into Grandmorin's throat assisted by Roubaud because the sight of blood gives Jacques an 'aiguillon si vif que sa chair en brûlait' (p. 1051), re-awakening with this feeling his repressed drive-wishes. In Part Two, I discuss the relevance of Jacques's reactions, in terms of his unsuccessful infantile sexual development, at the sight of women's breasts and blood, and how gratifying these sights are to his sexual desires. I also refer to the nineteenth century understanding of mental illness especially in relation to the link between mental disorder and sexuality in this part. I look at Serge's pathological degeneracy and highlight the works of Vernon Rosario and Matt Reed on mental illness and sexuality.¹¹

Owing to their psychosis, Serge and Jacques believe that their perceptions of the Virgin Mary, Albine, and Séverine as representing the maternal are real. For example, Serge's conversation with the Virgin Mary reflects his paranoia with regard to the Virgin Mary's womb and reinforces his psychotic state since it emerges from drive-wishes that have been repressed as a child. Serge and Jacques go through a stage of dream formation: in psychoanalytical terms, the imaginary or the oral stage. Entering this stage, in which the characters mirror themselves against the mother's image, both protagonists manifest desires towards the maternal; this is illustrated in their need to appropriate and remain in the womb. Serge's and Jacques's return to infantile sexuality through dreams determines their success at fulfilling their inhibited desires, and later, their individuation from the mother.

In his theory of infantile sexuality, Freud remarks that one of the tasks of psychoanalysis is to 'lift the veil of amnesia which shrouds the earliest years of childhood and to bring the expressions of early infantile sexual life which are hidden behind it to conscious

¹¹ Rosario, *The Erotic Imagination: French Histories of Perversity*.

memory'.¹² Serge's and Jacques's first years of childhood have been shrouded by amnesia because their early infantile sexual development has not reached maturity as should normally happen during infantile development stages. Their normal infantile sexuality has been masked by disorganized libidinal impulses which enveloped their early childhoods; this obstacle to their sexual maturity originated from maternal neglect as well as from the loss of both men's parents in *La Conquête de Plassans* and *La Bête humaine* respectively.

In *La Conquête de Plassans*, the narrator implies that Serge has been abandoned and ignored during the most important part of his sexual development. For Serge, the narrator tells us that 'il se rappelait qu'à huit ans il pleurait d'amour, dans les coins ; il ne savait pas qui il aimait; il pleurait parce qu'il aimait quelqu'un, bien loin'.¹³ Serge is confused and his insecurity originates from that loss: he lacked the maternal love he needed implied by the sentence 'il ne savait pas qui il aimait'. Although the narrator is vague about whom Serge loved, the repressed is in evidence. Indeed, the narrator's thoughts regarding Serge's loneliness are reflected, in this passage, in his protagonist's feelings. Through the transference between character's thoughts and the narrator's *discours indirect*, we could argue that Zola is unconsciously reflecting his own experience of loneliness after the death of his father. Monique Fol's examination of the unconscious in relation to Freud's 'fort/da' game is strengthened in this passage by the words 'bien', 'loin' and 'coins'. These words project a feeling of anxiety which originates from the separation of a loved one and heighten, simultaneously, the process of mourning in reinforcing the death drive.¹⁴

Serge's true love is his mother; she is the object of his desire. Serge has had his childhood's sexual growth stunted by parental neglect, especially by his mother Marthe Mouret, who in turn engulfs her family with her own anxiety and religious fantasy following

¹² Sigmund Freud, 'New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis and Other Works', in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud* ed. and trans. by James Trachey, 24 vols (London: Hogarth Press, 1964), xxii, 27.

¹³ Emile Zola, *La Conquête de Plassans*, in *Les Rougon-Macquart*, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 5 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1960-67), I, 1234.

¹⁴ See note 56, p. 28.

her unsatisfactory relationship with François Mouret, her husband. I discuss Marthe's anxious disposition and her devotion to Faujas further as they affect Serge when I look at Zola's representation of priests and his anticlerical views in this novel.

Jacques's childhood has also been shrouded in amnesia; he was brought up by his aunt, Tante Phasie, his father's cousin, after having been neglected and given away by his mother Gervaise. Like Serge, Jacques's infantile sexuality was not allowed to develop as he too was abandoned by his parents: '[C]'était une cousine de son père, une Lantier, [Tante Phasie] qui lui avait servi de marraine, et qui, à l'âge de six ans, l'avait pris chez elle, quand, son père et sa mère disparus, envolés à Paris, il était resté à Plassans' (*La Bête humaine*, p. 1027). Jacques's mother, Gervaise, had him at the age of fifteen, barely a woman herself. Jacques is only six years old when his mother leaves him; it is children who suffer maternal or paternal absence or death between birth and around ten years of age who tend to show symptoms of anxiety disorders in adulthood.¹⁵ Serge's and Jacques's amnesia is related also to Abraham's theory of the phantom which shows that unspeakable secrets are transmitted silently onto descendants without their knowledge. This comment strengthens the argument made for a spectral presence that encapsulates the texts under consideration. I show below how Serge's and later Jacques's psychic libidinal impulse is transmitted through dreams, and relate it to Freud's theory of the Œdipus complex.

¹⁵ Delfos, *Le Parent insaisissable et l'urgence d'écrire*, p. 45.

1.1 Serge's Dream: The Oral Stage

Serge and Jacques experience a 'rêve obsédant' with regard to female sexuality through dreams and hallucinations.¹⁶ The obsessive dreams or hallucinations which they experience reflect their unresolved infantile sexual development.¹⁷ In this section, I look at Serge's oral stage: I relate objects that compare to the maternal in Serge's psyche, as they function as free associations to an unfulfilled sexual development. Free associations are signifiers which replace elements that would link them with the female sexual reproductive organ in these novels. These elements play an important role in Serge's and Jacques's psyche given the lack of sexual gratification.

As babies enter the world in a vulnerable and defenceless state, Serge enters the world of the novel shrouded in amnesia of his childhood experiences, and as such, is vulnerable to female sexuality; he shows signs of insecurity and anxiety when confronted with women. He creates a fantasy as this will reunite him with his object of desire, which he is unconsciously in search of. In so doing, his image is reflected in Albine's image replacing that of the mother. Serge first reflects his image onto that of the Virgin Mary. This is carried out after he sees Albine for the first time; her presence affects him. Albine's vision is presented to him as a rapid flight of ideas (or images) that help release his sexual inhibitions:

[U]ne trouée éclatante s'était faite, dans le noir de la muraille. Ce fut comme une vision de forêt vierge, un enfoncement de futaie immense, sous une pluie de soleil. Dans cet éclair, le prêtre saisit nettement, au loin, des détails précis: une grande fleur jaune au centre d'une pelouse [...]; le tout noyé, perdu, flambant [...] que l'horizon entier n'était plus qu'un épanouissement. La porte claqua, tout disparut. (*La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret*, p. 1253)

Serge's return to childhood memories is activated by Albine's sudden presence in the room and by her raw (from the vegetation since she lives in the garden) and feminine smell. Roger

¹⁶ Freud formulates this phrase when he refers to recurrent pathological dreams in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, p. 77.

¹⁷ Freud cites Radestock's work on dreams and creativity when the latter refers to the 'splitting of the personality in dreams' (*The Interpretation of Dreams*, p. 77); see Paul Radestock, *Schlaf und Traum* (Leipzig: Breitkopf and Hartel, 1879).

Ripoll highlights Zola's definition of Serge's character in Zola's *Ébauche* as one 'poussé dans la bêtise et l'ignorance' (p. 11).¹⁸ He questions the reason for Zola to have modelled Serge's and Albine's story on that of the Bible; he argues that Zola was influenced by Jules Michelet's *La Montagne* (1868), a work in which Michelet 'fait allusion au mythe scandinave de l'arbre cosmologique, du frêne Yggdrasil, que Zola a recrée à sa manière lors de la vision de Serge'. Ripoll also remarks in the same passage that Michelet's work shows that Scandinavians believed that 'l'homme primitif avait été un arbre' (p. 12). Zola relates this myth to the 'Tree of Knowledge' in the Bible before the Fall, and Albine is part of it since she resides in Le Paradou. Indeed Albine is symbolized as a flower emerging from the 'forêt vierge', because at this stage in the novel she is still a virgin. She is, as Ripoll further observes, the 'fille-fleur' (p. 17). Yet, she represents the flower whom the narrator will later depict as the 'fleur naturelle de ces ordures, si heureuse de vivre, qu'elle sautait de sa tige, et qu'elle s'envolait sur sa bouche, en le parfumant de son long rire' (*La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret*, p. 1311). The narrator juxtaposes Albine's sexuality with the nefarious odours that the plants and the flowers exude after Serge and Albine have had sex. For Serge however, Albine's entrance into her grand-father Jean-Bernat's room, provides in Serge's psyche a sensorial vision, in that it brings out his repressed feelings, as the references to the 'forêt vierge' and 'futaie immense' suggest. The vision of Albine is reflected through Serge's hallucinations of seeing and 'smelling' Albine's flowery nature. This argument is further strengthened by the reference to 'pluie de soleil'. Arguably, the narrator is also taken by surprise at Albine's sudden entrance. He and Serge are imagining the female reproductive organ in this passage, since 'futaie' and 'forêt' suggest pubic hair and 'soleil' suggests light. Furthermore, this vision reinforces the paranoia felt by Serge and the narrator towards the mother who in their view should remain chaste, as the reference to 'forêt vierge' indicates. In the scene where we see Albine, Serge's vision is characterized by hallucinations brought about by the repressed: Albine represents his mother, but as a woman

¹⁸ Roger Ripoll, 'Le Symbolisme végétale dans *La Faute de l'abbé Mouret* : réminiscences et obsessions', *Cahiers Naturalistes*, 31 (1966), 11-22.

she is also part of the mystery which in turn connects to that of Adelaïde since both protagonists conduct their sexuality without conforming to patriarchal rules. Since dream is imagined in real sensory terms according to Freud, the details of Serge's 'vision' are for him (and for the narrator) neat and precise. Serge's perceptions of Albine's sexuality will eventually blossom into his own, as the reference to the horizon - this word functions as a metaphor for the future - that is penetrating the room suggests.

Albine's rapid entrance into the room awakens Serge's sexual desires because she arouses in him libidinal impulses through the vision of the 'forêt vierge'. Through this vision, he unconsciously puts into motion his return to infantile sexuality. This is illustrated when Serge visualises 'Albine ria[nt] sur le seuil du vestibule. [...], la tête renversée, la gorge toute gonflée [...]. Elle était comme un grand bouquet d'une odeur forte' (pp. 1253-54). Albine serves two purposes in Serge's psyche: one to represent his mother, the other his lover. Through the womanly smell of her 'forêt vierge', Albine embodies the maternal because Serge is in search of it. Clélia Anfray also believes that Serge is re-experiencing a new birth whilst in Albine's room.¹⁹ She argues that Serge's 'retour à l'enfance, voire à la naissance, prépare une renaissance d'un autre ordre [...] le retour à l'origine' (p. 47). For Anfray, Serge returns to the 'rites initiatiques du *regressus ad uterum*' (her emphasis). Serge does regress to the 'uterine' stage; this is illustrated when he tells Albine about his dream, one in which he was crawling 'le long d'un terrain interminable' (*La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret*, p. 1319). In addition for Serge, Albine, like the Virgin Mary, epitomizes the 'maîtresse si désirable' since with her he will spend 'des heures de volupté divine' (pp. 1289 and 1293), and through this process he gratifies his libido (Serge's childlike games with Albine are further considered below). Serge is in search of the breast and the womb. In fact, in his discourse he hallucinates that he is once again a child/baby, having imagined re-inserting himself into Marie's (and later Albine's) womb:

¹⁹ Clélia Anfray, 'La Faute (originelle) de l'abbé Mouret: approche mythocritique du roman', *Cahiers Naturalistes*, 79 (2005), 45-58.

O Marie, Vierge adorable, que n'ai-je cinq ans, que ne suis-je resté l'enfant qui collait ses lèvres à vos images ! Je vous prendrais sur mon cœur, je vous coucherais à mon côté, je vous embrasserais [...] comme une fille de mon âge. J'aurais votre robe étroite, votre voile enfantin, votre écharpe bleue, toute cette enfance qui fait de vous une grande sœur. [...] J'entrerais en vous par votre bouche entr'ouverte. (*La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret*, pp 1313 and 1315)

The reader should note the reference made to 'Marie', 'fille', and 'soeur' in the above quotation. Arguably, the narrator makes once again an indirect reference to the dead Marie; he is the same narrator as the one in *La Fortune des Rougon* since he is recounting, in this series, the story of a family under the Second Empire. In this passage the narrator attempts to bring Marie back from the dead (*La Fortune des Rougon*), unlocking through this the return of the repressed as Serge's monologue illustrates. Nevertheless, Serge's allusions to 'Marie', 'fille', and 'soeur' may also relate to his feminization and to the novelist's anticlerical views. Zola satirises the Catholic Church for having made Serge asexual or feminine through the Church's banning of marriage and sex in the priesthood. Indeed, Zola blames the role of the Catholic Church for obliging priests to observe celibacy and accuses it of meddling in private spheres with regard to young priests' sexuality. For Zola, Serge's mental disturbance is due to the lack of 'seminal material' as Tim Verhoeven has demonstrated.²⁰ I will discuss further Verhoeven's work on celibate priests below and show that there is a link between mental derangement in Serge's celibacy and 'forced continence'.

As shown above, Serge is affected by a phantom, one who emerges from his unfulfilled sexuality and is caused by women. In fact, this spectral presence is symbolized by the female statue whose phantom roams Le Paradou: 'C'était quelque noyée de cent ans, le lent suicide que des peines avaient dû laisser choir au fond de cette source. La nappe claire qui coulait sur elle, avait fait de sa face une pierre lisse, une blancheur sans visage' (p. 1347). This suggests the return of the repressed because the statue's delineation and her 'phantasmal' presence in the narrative relates to the past but also to her 'volupté ancienne' (p. 1347); through her

²⁰ Tim Verhoeven, 'The Satyriasis Diagnosis: Anti-Clerical Doctors and Celibate Priests in Nineteenth-Century France', *French History*, 26, 4 (2012), 515.

(assumed) uncontrolled sexuality, which according to the narrator led her to her death, she haunts Albine, who inherits this sexual desire. In alluding to *La Bête humaine*, Jules Lemaître remarks that Zola is 'le poète du fond ténébreux de l'homme, et c'est son œuvre entière que devrait porter ce titre: *La Bête humaine*'.²¹ Lemaître also highlights the novel's psychological nature in his article in *Le Figaro*:

Nous mêmes, chrétiens, civilisés, lettrés [...] nous avons des mouvements de haines, ou d'amour, de concupiscence ou de colère qui viennent pour ainsi dire de plus loin que nous; et nous ne savons pas à quoi bon nous obéissons. Nos chétives et passagères personnes ne sont que des vagues [...]; et sous ces vagues, il y a toujours un gouffre. C'est en somme ce qu'exprime « La Bête humaine » avec une mélancolique et farouche majesté.²²

Lemaître's reference to 'gouffre' when relating it to *La Bête humaine*, suggests Abraham's crypt; this argument is also valid for *La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret*, in that Serge and Albine's love is connected to the old female statue whose presence in the narrative is related to the crypt since it (the statue) has figuratively transgressed patriarchal expectations of the feminine, as did Adelaïde, and is punished as suggested by 'peines' and this leads to her suicide. The statue's presence in the narrative relates to this novel, indeed to the series, since for the narrator she resides in Le Paradou 'depuis quelques années'. The statue's presence in the narrative also strengthens the argument for the existence of a female phantom who roams this novel since she is long dead but is discovered with 'une blancheur sans visage'.²³ Accordingly, she also silently transmits her (depraved) sexuality to Albine, since Albine lives with 'her' in Le Paradou. The organic disease or the *fêlure* which women inherit in the *Rougon-Macquart* novels is evident in this novel too and Serge is the victim.

²¹ Jules Lemaître quoted by Henri Mitterand, in Emile Zola, *La Bête humaine, Les Rougon-Macquart*, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 5 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1960-67), IV, 1747.

²² Jules Lemaître, 'La Bête humaine', in *Le Figaro*, 8 March 1890. Quoted by Anthony John Evenhuis in *Messiah or Antichrist?: A Study of the Messianic Myth in the Work of Zola* (Newark, DE, and London: University of Delaware Press, 1998), p. 170.

²³ Griffiths, 'Scribbling Ghosts'.

For Anthony Evenhuis however, Zola is unconsciously representing his mistake with a prostitute, Berthe, as depicted in *La Confession de Claude*.²⁴ Evenhuis remarks that the writer 'has personally experienced this disillusionment in trying to redeem a prostitute' (p. 41). For Evenhuis, Zola's sexual insecurity is related to his belief in a 'messianic theme of atonement' in respect of women's sexual transgression. For Zola women must atone for their sins, and for Evenhuis Zola 'cannot see a definite solution to the problem of [sexual] guilt [in women]; his novelistic world plunges into darkness and any perceived saviour will be an agent of death and destruction' (p. 41). Zola's sexuality is seen as a source of guilt and anguish as the analyses of *Thérèse Raquin* and *Madeleine Férat* have shown.

Serge inherits from his great-grandmother (Adelaïde Rougon) and his mother (Marthe Mouret) their mental illness: Marthe inherits her grandmother Adelaïde's characteristics and physical traits: '[T]out le portrait d'Adelaïde, [...]; la ressemblance physique avait ici sauté par-dessus Pierre, pour reparaître chez sa fille, avec plus d'énergie. [...], Marthe avait l'effarement, le détraquement intérieur de sa grand-mère, dont elle était à distance l'étrange et exacte reproduction' (*La Fortune des Rougon*, p. 133). Serge inherits his mother's religious mania and his great-grandmother's sexual 'détraquement' as shown below.

Marthe Mouret, née Rougon, became detached from her children and her husband after having discovered a new form of religion influenced by the priest Faujas. Marthe's religious fervour and her deep interest in Faujas becomes a fetish; this fetish replaces a sexual *jouissance* that was lacking. The narrator does not say that Marthe is sexually dissatisfied (he makes it clear that she married Mouret out of love in *La Fortune des Rougon*, p. 133), but implies that she is unhappy and nostalgic when he introduces her in the first scene of *La Conquête de Plassans*. He reflects her despondent attitude towards her surroundings, whilst describing her 'tendresse un peu triste' (*La Conquête de Plassans*, p. 899). Marthe's unhappiness relates to Adelaïde's madness too; Adelaïde has the 'cerveau fêlé' because she

²⁴ Anthony John, Evenhuis, *Messiah or Antichrist?* p. 41.

has transgressed in her duty as a wife and as a mother (*La Fortune des Rougon*, p. 41). Marthe inherits her grandmother's characteristics and physical traits. However, Marthe finds fulfilment in the Church, but sees Faujas as the reflection of God with whom she can satisfy her inhibited sexuality.²⁵ The Church becomes for her a religious fetish which functions as a replacement for sexual gratification and Serge inherits it owing to his unfulfilled libidinal impulses towards his mother.²⁶ In this novel, there are echoes of Michelet's *Du prêtre, de la femme, de la famille* (1845). Paul Pelkmans shows how Michelet's anticlericalism deals with Catholic priests' pretence or deception in relation to true Christianity, to their power over women, and to their 'esprit de pieuse intrigue'.²⁷ He shows how Michelet criticises their 'charlatanism' and condemns their position. According to Pelkman, Michelet's criticism of priests is related to their 'emprise insidieuse d'un esprit, qui altère ceux qu'il subjuge', and that 'Michelet est surtout scandalisé par la distribution arbitraire de la grâce qui sauve l'un et condamne l'autre' (p. 21). Zola similarly reproaches priests' power over naïve women. He shows how Marthe's religious devotion becomes a fetish; indeed, her character type was perceived by doctors in nineteenth-century France as suffering from 'religious erotomania' falling in love with priests and desiring sex with them. Doctor Santenoise (1900) and Doctors Leroy and Juquelier (1910) demonstrated in their studies on erotic insanity 'the frequent association of mystical and erotic delirium'.²⁸ Marthe's newly acquired devotion turns into sexual religious fervour which she invests in Ovide Faujas. Faujas is a sadist who has perverted views of women, and uses their naiveté to exploit them. Zola shows that he has a luciferian egotism: 'Elle lui appartenait, il aurait fait d'elle ce qu'il aurait voulu' (*La Conquête de Plassans*, p. 1065). The narrator's comment reinforces Michelet's accusations in respect of priests'

²⁵ See Rosario, *The Erotic Imagination*, pp. 45-69 and 70-120.

²⁶ This behaviour is typical of Abraham and Torok's theory of the crypt whereby descendants unknowingly inherit their parents' secrets or behaviour. See Abraham and Torok, *L'Écorce et le noyau*, pp. 427-33.

²⁷ Paul Pelkman, 'Le Prêtre, la femme et la famille: notes sur l'anticléricalisme de Michelet', *Romantisme*, 9 (1973), 21-23.

²⁸ Rosario, *The Erotic Imagination*, p. 120.

power over women. Marthe's love for Faujas, which allows him to use her, reflects her naiveté, but also emphasizes her sadomasochist and fetishist desires to fulfil an inhibited sexuality which she replaces with her religious cult of Ovide Faujas: 'Elle était heureuse de ces coups. La main de fer qui la pliait, la main qui la retenait au bord de cette adoration continue, [...] la fouettait d'un désir sans cesse renaissant' (p. 1065).

Like his mother Marthe, 'écoutez Ovide, murmura t-elle, je vous aime, et vous le savez, n'est-ce pas ? [...] J'étais satisfaite, j'espérais que nous pourrions être heureux un jour, dans une union divine' (*La Conquête de Plassans*, p. 1176), Serge also dreams of a 'volupté divine' (*La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret*, p. 1289). Zola offers Marthe Mouret as an example of a mother who neglects her role as nurturer because she is manipulated by Faujas's sadism against women for political interest. Faujas resembles Sombreval, Barbey D'Aurevilly's priest in *Un Prêtre marié* (1865). In contrast to Sombreval, who marries his teacher's daughter, Faujas is however chaste as he does not believe in sex with women; he hates women and prefers, as the narrator implies, sex with boys. Indeed, Faujas is fond of Serge and has a special penchant for him; he becomes 'le préféré de l'abbé Faujas' and is his 'grand ami' and both characters live 'l'un chez l'autre' (*La Conquête de Plassans*, pp. 1011 and 1038). When Serge falls ill, Faujas looks after him with devotion (p. 1038). For Faujas, women are his enemies, yet he uses their implied naiveté to fulfil his political ambitions. Indeed, Faujas embodies Satan because he symbolizes the nineteenth century criminal and the outlawed; we are told by Mademoiselle Rastoil that he nearly strangled a priest in Besançon before arriving in Plassans (p. 959). Faujas is another Vautrin, the male protagonist of Balzac's *La Comédie humaine*. Furthermore, Marthe's husband, François, views Faujas as '[C]e diable d'homme' (p. 935), who ironically conquers his family and who wins the bet François offered his wife 'je defis bien le diable de venir nous tenter' (p. 932). Balzac's Abbé Troubet in *Le Curé de Tours* is another character who resembles Faujas in his manipulations and hold over women.

Zola's hatred for priests is also highlighted by Maria Watroba who argues that for Zola, 'l'influence du prêtre est telle que Marthe devient incapable de prendre soin de ses enfants'.²⁹ Indeed, she argues that for the novelist, 'le catholicisme s'ancre dans l'aversion de la sexualité et par conséquent dans le partenaire que celle-ci exige' (pp. 192-93). Watroba further remarks that for Zola, 'ce sont aux femmes, ces premières victimes de la religion qu'il veut s'adresser en priorité dans ses romans' (p. 167). I discuss Zola's anticlericalism in greater detail in Chapter Six.

Although Serge is nineteen when he leaves the family home and when his parents die, he is surrounded by a dysfunctional family: Marthe neglects her children as shown, although she loves them: 'Marthe couvait du regard ses trois enfants' (p. 901). François Mouret is also portrayed as removed from his family duties; he is motivated by money and neglects his wife (p. 972). He also falls prey to Faujas's political ambitions, but realizes too late the priest's covetousness of his wife and his home. Despite her neglect, Marthe attempts to reprove her husband, but, as a woman, is unable to stand against her husband's wishes: "Nous étions pourtant si à l'aise, seuls dans notre maison!" *laisa échapper Marthe à demi-voix*' (p. 903). She is sorry that Mouret has taken the decision to allow Faujas in their house without consulting her and is concerned as to what the implications will be for her family: 'Marthe restait désolée. Elle regardait autour d'elle, la maison heureuse, baignant dans l'adieu du soleil le jardin, où l'ombre devenait plus grise' (p. 904). Marthe's initial instinct is right, Faujas is the family's downfall, as the metaphor of the setting sun for a sombre future conveys. Yet, she is also partly responsible for it: she is not a strong woman, as her reactions to Faujas and to her husband have shown, and her selfish nature is revealed as soon as Faujas enters her world. It is probable that she has acted selfishly as she failed to pay attention to her children, especially Serge, as they were growing up (Adelaïde too had neglected her children, see Chapter Two). This is reflected when, in *La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret*, the narrator tells us that Serge 'se

²⁹ Maria Watroba, 'Le Prêtre, la femme, la famille: *La Conquête de Plassans*', in *L'Écriture du féminin chez Zola et dans la fiction naturaliste*, ed. by Anna Gural-Migdal (Bern: Peter Lang, 2003), pp. 167, 192-93.

rappelait qu'à huit ans il pleurait d'amour, dans les coins, il ne s'avait pas qui il aimait' (p. 1234). Serge inherits her fetishist devotion to religion, especially to the Virgin Mother: 'il était d'un esprit religieux' (*La Conquête de Plassans*, p. 1037).

In order to confront his phantom, Serge needs to pass through the imaginary stage of infantile sexuality to re-instate the mother-child bond; he proceeds to this stage when he meets Albine. Serge shows symptoms of sexual insecurity. These feelings increase his neurosis and paranoia about female genitalia because he has been brain-washed by the seminary priests, as Zola indicates, and has espoused the Catholic Church's doctrine of sexuality: 'Lui, gardait toute l'ombre morte du séminaire. [...] Il fermait la porte de ses sens, cherchait à s'affronter des nécessités du corps' (*La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret*, pp. 1232 and 1233). Although Zola highlights the dangers of Catholicism in denying sex to priests, he also reflects a neurosis in relation to female sexuality: indeed, Zola's attempt to warn his female readers about the power of priests is undeniably related to his anticlerical views, but is also linked with his failed attempt to 'rehabilitate' women, as illustrated by Berthe in *La Confession de Claude*, as well as in *L'Assommoir* when Goujet cannot save Gervaise from perdition.³⁰

Serge enters a world of imagination in order to alleviate the anxiety that the detachment from the maternal has produced. Serge's first attachment is to the Church, having lost both his parents on the same day as the narrator of *La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret* tells the reader (p. 1233). He replaces this loss with the Church's indoctrination: 'Il n'était plus qu'une âme ravie par la contemplation [...]. Il était la chose de Dieu [...] dans le resplendissement d'un bonheur sans fin' (*La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret*, p. 1233) Through this *discours indirect libre*, the narrator's tone is sarcastic. Although he reports Serge's thoughts, he nonetheless attracts the reader's attention to Serge's brainwashed Catholic education. The reader is presented with Serge's deranged mind through his monologue. Zola shows that Serge's repressed libido is substituted by his love for the Church and for God. Serge has abandoned everything for the

³⁰ See Evenhuis, *Messiah or Antichrist?*

Church: 'ayant tout quitté pour se donner entier' (p. 1233). The motherly image that Serge is in search of is replaced by the Church, where he metaphorically masturbates, as the following sentence implies: Serge feels for the Church 'un élan d'amour pur, une horreur de la sensation physique. Là, *mourant* à lui-même, le *dos tourné* à la lumière, il aurait attendu de n'être plus, de se *perdre* dans la souveraine blancheur des âmes' (p. 1232, my emphasis). In this sentence, it is believed that Serge performs erotomania or masturbation, since he hates, at this moment, any physical contact and uses the Church as a sexual fetish. If Zola meant to have Serge masturbate, his intentions were to provoke sensationalism even if for certain readers this indirect metaphor would have been seen as blasphemy. Similarly, this would have either enhanced the portrayal of reprehensible Catholic priests in his readers' mind or offended them. Nevertheless, Serge's type of fetishism is also related to religion and to saints. This type was a matter of study for Doctor Charcot who drew parallels 'between states of religious ecstasy and stages of "grand hysteria" and related this to a form of "theomania"'.³¹ Furthermore, Serge's ecclesiastical celibacy was seen as 'Satyriasis' by nineteenth-century anticlerical doctors, a dangerous imposition on the male body by the Catholic Church.³² This 'illness' was represented as a state of excessive sexual desire in men - 'specifically the body of the priest' (Verhoeven, pp. 507 and 509). Doctors believed, as Verhoeven has shown, that the 'priest, because of his vows of celibacy, loomed as a potential sexual predator. [...]. The vows of celibacy were [for them] an unnatural restraint on a legitimate and powerful instinct, far from dampening sexual desire, only inflamed it' (p. 506). Verhoeven gives the example of Mingrat, a priest, who was found guilty of murdering one of his mistresses for whom he had acted as a confessor (p. 507). Matt Reed also points to this type of medical discourse and refers to the period's treatise which highlighted symptoms of 'mental disturbance [...] with alternative periods of delirium and lucidity' in these types.³³ Reed observes that these patients

³¹ Rosario, *The Erotic Imagination*, p. 120.

³² Verhoeven, 'The Satyriasis Diagnosis', 506.

³³ Reed, 'Moral Agency in the Psychiatric Imagination in Nineteenth-Century France', p. 67.

were categorized as “aliéné[s]” but ‘within them [...] remained “*un reste de raison*”, from which they were temporarily separated’ (p. 67). Zola models Serge’s and later Jacques’s hallucinations on those medical analyses.

1.2 Serge’s Fantasy World

Serge moves from a religious fetishist devotion to a sexual one. This is mirrored when he moves to Les Artauds as priest in charge of its parish. In this village, his inhibited libidinal impulses begin to open up or, to use an organic metaphor, to sprout, since his repressed sexuality is ready to burst forth. In Les Artauds, the devious sexuality which, according to the narrator, inhabits its villagers, principally the women since they are for him ‘impudiques’ (p. 1242), overwhelms Serge; he is incapable of dealing with it and is powerless to re-educate its inhabitants as he reproves Bambousse, Rosalie’s father, for her sexual ‘fornications’ and for falling pregnant (p. 1243). Serge’s inhibited sexuality is revealed when he imagines the Viorne, a valley that surrounds Les Artauds, as a female temptress who indulges in sex with the sun and the river, and who, figuratively speaking, is metaphorically inseminated by the neighbouring river (La Seille) as indicated by the narrator: ‘Et, tout au bout, par un coin écroulé des collines [...], on apercevait [...] une échappée de la vallée voisine, que fécondait la Viorne, une rivière descendue des gorges de la Seille’ (p. 1231). Serge’s unresolved childhood conflicts are also manifest when he is first ‘ébloui’ by the river fertilising the valley. Serge’s sexual inhibitions are therefore burgeoning at this stage, and his sexual crisis deepens and takes effect after meeting Albine who releases his frustrations by sleeping with him.

Serge crowns the Church’s indoctrinations and parochial views about sex education with his own undeveloped libido. Frère Archangias has a strong influence over him and warns him against women whom he sees as personifications of evil as for him, ‘la femme pousse en elles’ as they (the girls) have ‘la damnation dans leurs jupes. Des créatures bonnes à jeter au fumier, avec leurs saletés qui empoisonnent’ (p. 1239). There is a parallel running between the

Church and Archangias's indoctrinations against sexuality and that of the nineteenth century's sexual education of children: both admonish sexual freedom and suppress the child's natural sexual development, as Archangias's invectives against women and children demonstrate. These accusations affect Serge, yet also help his burgeoning sexuality to emerge (pp. 1272-80).

Serge's sexual frustrations are further emphasized when he leaves Bambousse to continue on his errands. Bambousse also believes that the village girls of Les Artauds are 'impudiques'; he tells Serge '[e]lles sont toutes comme cela' (p. 1244) at once revealing a frigid mentality and misogynistic judgement. Serge's hallucinations are brought to the fore when he has another vision and, again, imagines the shape of the countryside of Les Artauds as a woman who tantalises him through her warm breath. Serge experiences as a caress 'un souffle plus chaud', and then believes he is seeing the contours of a naked woman's body experiencing an orgasm: 'cherchant d'où lui venait cette caresse', Serge sees 'sur l'horizon enflamé [...] cette campagne de passion, séchée, pâmée au soleil, dans un vautrement de femme ardent'. In this passage the narrator is helping Serge in his initiation to sex by presenting his protagonist with the mirage of a naked and sexually tempting woman. The narrator is complicit with Serge since through Serge's own vision of Les Artauds, the narrator's vision is also focused on this scene and is thus also sexually gratified. This 'vision', in the depiction of this scene, highlights the narrator's own interest in sexuality. Indeed, the narrator also has a fantasy or a mirage in seeing 'Les Artauds, en plein soleil, [qui] fornicuaient avec la terre' (p. 1240). In this passage the narrator's and Serge's sexual inhibitions are reinforced. As discussed, this is strengthened by the symbolic sexual nature of Les Artauds and by Serge's action of pulling down his hat over his forehead, as if to protect himself from this vision: 'il rabattait son chapeau sur son front pour échapper aux haleines tièdes' (p. 1240). His hallucinations are moreover heightened when the narrator describes the countryside's outline and compares its hills to women in the act of copulation: 'C'étaient des fronts suant apparaissant derrière les buissons, des poitrines haletantes se redressant lentement, un effort

ardent de fécondation'. Yet, the narrator tells the reader that the mirages or hallucinations do not bother Serge in the least: 'rien de troublant ne venait jusqu'à sa chair' (p. 1240). If we look at these sexualized scenes we could argue that the narrator embodies the 'devil' so to speak, in whispering temptations of sexual delight to Serge; in fact this novel evokes the fall of Adam. Zola's ambiguous, yet sarcastic irony in stating that Serge is not affected by this sight is made on purpose. Arguably, this highlights his desire to annoy Barbey d'Aureilly who condemned this novel as 'un livre d'intentions scélérates. [...]. L'auteur de la *Faute* n'en fait pas moins contre le Catholicisme acte de haine profonde [...]; tel est le dessous de la *Bête*, et tel est le crapaud de ce livre'.³⁴ Nevertheless, Zola's irony in stating that Serge is not affected by the mirage which he experiences in this scene, also reinforces the narrator's sexual inhibitions since he is complicit with Serge in 'admiring' Les Artauds' topographical similarity to a woman's sexual ardour. Serge's sexuality is activated at this stage because his hallucinations turn into real sensory images for him when he meets Albine.³⁵

The sexual nature of Les Artauds provokes Serge's rehabilitation to sex, but it is after seeing Albine that Serge enters his first stage of infantile sexuality; his libidinal impulses are stimulated at the sight of her: at this moment Serge discovers a new form of gratification as opposed to his 'copulation' with the Church (as discussed above). Serge's experiences, activated by illusions from his errands in the village, are characterized in terms of psychoanalysis as rapid flights of ideas. This is reflected when he holds an infantile discourse with the Virgin Mary and through this conversation passes through the œdipal stage, transiting from the darkness of an inhibited libido to the need to enjoy sex. He then begins to gratify his libidinal impulses which contribute to his sexual regeneration.³⁶ His hallucinations take effect first in the description of the Virgin Mary, when Serge imagines her 'ampleurs fécondes' and

³⁴ Quoted by Silvie Thorel-Cailleteau (ed.), in *Zola: textes de Ulbach* (Paris: Presse Universitaire de la Sorbonne, 1998), pp. 76-77.

³⁵ See note 3.

³⁶ Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, trans. by Joan Riviere, ed. by James Strachey (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 1989), pp. 37-47, 59, 62 and 70.

her 'jupe divine', as well as her 'étroites lèvres riantes' wherein he can grow 'sans la nécessité abominable du sexe', because he wants to remain, as he tells Mary, her 'enfant [...] je vous entendais m'appeler' (p. 1313). Serge wants to remain 'un enfant', never to grow up, 'faites que j'ai cinq ans' (p. 1314). Serge's wish to remain a child is repeated (and examined) later when he is transported into Albine's room and in Le Paradou's garden; they represent for him the mother's womb.

1.3 Ideational Representations of Objects with Female Genitalia

Serge's delusional state with regard to his inhibited sexuality begins after having seen Albine (p. 1240). Serge is already tempted at this stage. On his return to the Church, he holds a dialogue with the Virgin Mary to hide his fears of Albine's enticing sexuality, but also to reinforce his alliance with the Virgin. The Virgin Mary, however, replaces his unconscious desire for Albine: the dream that Serge experiences whilst recounting to the Virgin Mary functions as a fantasy of the unconscious wherein the libido is allowed to follow its natural course. The Virgin Mary is the one who fulfils the fantasy at this stage. She replaces his (sexual) adulation or fetishism and becomes comparable to his mother: 'Tout enfant, un peu sauvage, se refugiant dans les coins, il se plaisait à penser qu'une belle dame le protégeait. [...] Il racontait que la Vierge était venue l'embrasser. Il avait grandi sous cette caresse de femme [...] qu'il cachait jalousement pour *jouir* seul' (p. 1287, my emphasis). Serge is jealous of Mary's lovers or her devotees; the reference to 'jouir' reinforces Serge's wish for an incestuous relationship with the mother (and again his religious erotomania, see above), represented here by the Virgin's image and his desire to possess her. The Virgin Mary and Albine are the link by which Serge can exhibit and release his sexual inhibitions. As representation of his mother, the Virgin Mary permits Serge a 'union sans tache' (p. 1291). This is reflected in the wish to remain in the Virgin Mary's 'jardin [qui] poussait autour de lui, avec ses hautes floraisons de chasteté' (p. 1290). Mary's garden represents for Serge the uterus, where Serge's wish is to penetrate it

and remain in its confines, as his monologue shows: 'J'entrerais en vous, par votre bouche entr'ouverte, et les noces s'accompliront' (p. 1315). In these passages, Serge's fetishes with regard to womb appropriation and his desire to remain a child are reinforced. This is highlighted when he uses baby language, reflected in the stuttering effect as the narrator indicates: 'Les lèvres balbutiantes, l'abbé Mouret regardait la grande Vierge' (p. 1286). Serge has with Mary a 'babillage d'enfant et d'amant' (p. 1289). He enjoys playing with Mary's 'étroite bouche riante', figuratively sitting inside her 'jupe divine' (p. 1287). Serge's hallucinations reinforce his wish to return to infancy; this is reflected in the game which he 'plays' with the Virgin Mary and in the indirect reference to the vagina (as in 'jupe divine') and lips. The game which Serge plays is part of an essential infantile sexual stage. For Serge, it provides him with an ecstatic experience since he is enjoying the discourse with the Virgin because, as shown above, Mary represents his mother through the word 'féconde' as she has the potential of reproducing, given her fertile nature. Clélia Anfray also believes that Serge returns to infancy. She argues that '[c]e retour à l'enfance peut seul faire émerger le mythe des origines. [...] L'enfant vit dans un temps mythique, paradisiaque'.³⁷ For Anfray, the Virgin Mary (and later Albine) 'va incarner dans un premier temps, la mère que Serge n'a pas eue' (p. 47).

Serge's delusional state takes him further in his imagination of a celestial family wherein he thrives. Although the narrator is presenting an image of paradise whilst narrating Serge's hallucinations, Serge's desire for a happy celestial family reinforces nonetheless the cryptic factor that exists in Zola's language as explained in Chapter One. This is illustrated when Serge believes he is seeing:

[U]ne famille de belles jeunes filles. [...] Elles lui semblaient avoir son âge, être les petites filles qu'il aurait voulu rencontrer, les petites filles du ciel avec lesquelles les petits garçons morts à sept ans doivent jouer éternellement. (*La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret*, p. 1287)

³⁷ Clélia Anfray, 'La Faute (originelle) de l'abbé Mouret', p. 47.

Although we read Serge's thoughts through this stream of consciousness we could also argue that Zola reflects, through Serge's monologue, his own affects: for example, the last sentence 'petits garçons [...] doivent jouer éternellement' suggests an obligation on the part of Serge to relate to, or to associate with girls even if they are dead. This is reinforced in the same passage by the phrase: 'qu'il aurait voulu rencontrer'. The reader questions the reason for Serge's wish to play with dead little girls. The psychoanalytic reading suggests that Zola is presenting an elegy to a dead child (as he does with Marie in *La Fortune des Rougon*). This reinforces the mourning aspect of this passage as the ethereal figure of Marie (of *La Fortune des Rougon*), or her ghost 'veillissait avec lui, toujours plus âgée d'un ou deux ans' (*La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret*, p. 1287); if Serge is related to Adelaïde, he should also be related to the dead Marie in *La Fortune des Rougon* if we accept that Marie is Adelaïde's daughter, as my argument emphasized in Chapter Two. Arguably, Zola represents a happy family picture (mother/child/sister). This delineation is further reinforced when Serge believes he is five years old as the reference to 'cinq ans' suggests (p. 1314). The inadvertent juxtaposition between 'les petites filles du ciel' with 'petits garçons morts à sept ans' in the last sentence, emphasizes the cryptic nature of Zola's language and strengthens the theory of the phantom which I argue functions as one of the principal features of these novels.

Serge's illusion of the maternal is reflected in the ambivalent image that he unconsciously makes of Albine. This is illustrated in *Le Paradou* where the Virgin Mary's 'ampleur féconde' and her 'bel intérieur' (p. 1386) are replaced by the garden of *Le Paradou* and by Albine's room, where he wishes to remain the sole inhabitant: 'Lui, habitait le bel intérieur de Marie [or Albine], s'y appuyant, s'y cachant, s'y perdant sans réserve, buvant le lait d'amour infini qui tombait goutte à goutte de ce sein virginal' (p. 1289). In fact, when Serge is in *Le Paradou*, he believes that he as a young boy will play and enjoy 'games' with Albine.

Serge's fantasies about the Virgin Mary are transposed to Albine's room, where Serge once again desires to be in Albine's womb. This is illustrated when Albine is watching over

Serge after he has been brought by his relative, Pascal Rougon, to Le Paradou after his illness: 'un souffle d'enfant, assoupi s'entendait, dans le grand silence. Mais elle [Albine] s'inquiéta, [...] elle ne put s'empêcher de venir, à pas légers, soulever le coin d'un rideau' (p. 1316). In this passage, Serge is re-experiencing the feeling of returning to childhood. He feels the warmth coming from Albine's room and from her caring: 'tu as besoin d'être aimé' as she tells him (p. 1317). Albine behaves like a mother would when entering the nursery to check on her baby. Indeed, Serge thinks he is a baby who has travelled through the birth canal in the 'noir' and finds his trip 'singulier' since he comes from a 'long voyage [...] le long d'un souterrain interminable. A certaines grosses douleurs, le souterrain brusquement se murait, [...], les parois se resserraient' (p. 1319). This sentence enhances the image of the delivery of the unborn child since Serge also encounters 'un obstacle', when he believes he is fighting 'pieds [et] poings, du crâne, en désespérant de pouvoir jamais traverser cet éboulement de plus en plus considérable ... Puis, [...], le front heurtant le roc, je mettais une conscience pleine d'angoisse [...] pour arriver le plus vite possible' (p. 1319).

Serge appropriates Albine's womb in order to satisfy his sexual needs or to move towards the oral stage of his libidinal development. Like the Virgin Mary's chaste uterine garden, Le Paradou is also a garden which symbolizes the uterus. Le Paradou's uterine allusion is delineated by the depiction of rivers and fountains which symbolize the maternal womb: for example the 'murailles' that encircle the garden are a synonym for the uterine wall as the Virgin Mary's garden was. The rivers and fountains arguably represent the amniotic fluid in which Serge rests and bathes, and the tree of life seems to illustrate the umbilical cord whose branches feed Serge (p. 1405). Serge is protected in both, he wants to remain the sole inhabitant of Mary's and Albine's wombs, and as Serge is happy in Mary's womb he is consequently anxious about any stranger who may come to appropriate Albine's womb because she should remain chaste, as the reference to the 'forêt vierge' indicated. Albine reassures him that she has blocked the hole that leads to another world; Serge is indeed

frightened of the real world as he does not want to grow up but prefers to remain in her womb/garden. This suggests that Albine is figuratively carrying Serge inside her womb; her vagina is blocked (as the reference to 'trou' suggests, see below) and does not allow any foreign body into it, as the following passage shows:

La muraille était crevée, elle avait un trou énorme par lequel on apercevait tout le pays d'à-coté. Serge la regarda avec une supplication inquiète dans les yeux. Elle eut un haussement d'épaules pour le rassurer. "Oh ! mais j'ai bouché le trou ! Va, je te l'ai dit nous sommes bien seuls". (*La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret*, p. 1386)

Through the metaphors of gestation and birth, the narrator highlights Serge's jealousy of any possible trespassers because for him, a mother should remain chaste. This is represented in the depiction of the high wall which surrounds the garden but keeps Albine safe from others apart from Serge. The wish to re-enter the womb and keep it sealed is further emphasized by the link that exists between 'trou' and 'bouché'.

As in Mary's garden, Serge also enjoys remaining in Albine's Paradou: 'Et lui se promenait dans ce jardin à l'ombre, [...] lui soupirait' (p. 1289). When Serge finds himself in it, his behaviour is compared to that of a baby. It is at this stage that Serge progresses to the anal stage through kissing and playing with Albine. The anal stage demonstrates the possessive control and retention of the mother since Serge is dependent upon this intimate interaction in order to progress to the phallic stage. This is further reinforced in the passage when Albine returns from her errands in the garden. Serge's reactions to Albine's escapade in the garden reinforce his anxiety and sexual insecurity. Since Albine represents his mother, Serge is jealous and insecure:

D'autre fois, [...], Albine disparaissait pendant des heures. Et lorsqu'elle rentrait, elle le trouvait les yeux luisant de curiosité, dévoré d'impatience. Il lui criait : "D'où viens-tu ?" Il la prenait pas les bras, lui sentait les jupes, le corsage, les joues. [...]. Il la gardait auprès de lui, la respirant comme un bouquet. (*La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret*, pp. 1325-26)

Serge's inhibited sexuality flourishes with Albine since he can gratify his libidinal impulses; he plays games with Albine in smelling her, touching her, holding her near him, and eventually

falling asleep in her arms, as Albine remarks: “‘Ah! Le cher bambin” dit Albine, en regardant Serge qui s’était endormi à son cou’ (p. 1325).

Serge’s dream of penetrating the mother’s womb, remaining in it and eventually re-emerging from it to enjoy the ‘lait maternel’ (p. 1289), strengthens the œdipal complex and incestuous desire that a child has towards its mother at that stage of infantile sexuality. This image may also represent Zola’s own anxieties towards his mother who left him in the care of her parents to pursue her husband’s debtors.³⁸ Serge’s libidinal desire towards the maternal is also considered by Olivier Got, who rightly remarks that ‘aidé par les croquis de Zola, par ses dossiers préparatoires, on peut noter qu’il est à peu-près rond, qu’il évoque le ventre maternel.’³⁹ We do not know whether Zola intentionally drew the Paradou in the shape of the womb, but if he did, it would strengthen the suggestion made above about the separation from his mother. Nonetheless, the representation of Le Paradou as the maternal womb helps Serge reconcile with the maternal. Having remained in his ‘mother’s womb’, Serge’s experiences lead him nevertheless to the detachment and individuation from the maternal. Before this happens, Serge needs to enter the masculine symbolic world. This process is further discussed in Part 2 of the Chapter.

1. 4 Jacques’s Dream: The Oral Stage

The dream of a return to the womb is equally portrayed in Jacques in *La Bête humaine*, but is projected differently: Jacques’s personality is the antithesis of that of Serge, although Jacques’s mental illness was also related to Morel’s and Magnan’s theories of hereditary degeneration.⁴⁰ Whilst Serge’s reactions when confronted with female sexuality are comparable to those of a child, Jacques gives the appearance of being in control, yet he is not. Although Jacques wishes to appropriate the mother’s womb, as illustrated below, he

³⁸ See Mitterand, *Zola*, I, 75-77, 94, 228.

³⁹ Olivier Got, *Les Jardins de Zola : psychanalyse et paysages mythiques dans ‘Les Rougon-Macquart’* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2002), pp. 32 and 38-40.

⁴⁰ See Reed, ‘Moral Agency and the Psychiatric Imagination’.

nonetheless flees the incestuous desire. They are comparable, however, in their needs to 'reconquérir la femelle', or to penetrate and tame women, as will be shown.

Similarly to Serge's mental illnesses of psychosis and paranoia, Jacques also suffers from traumatic psychosis.⁴¹ Jacques's trauma is also related to sexuality. As in the case of Serge, Jacques's infantile needs have been cut short by maternal neglect. He was also abandoned by his parents and taken in by his father's cousin, Tante Phasie. Jacques's psychosis is, in contrast to that of Serge, criminal and murderous; the knife and the scissors that are used in some passages of this novel by Jacques and Flore are emblematic of the phallus whose nature is to penetrate women and, in Jacques's case, to kill them.

Jacques projects an aggressive control over women whose breasts incite perverse and murderous manifestations of libidinal impulses; this control is related to the death instinct. When linking the ancestral 'fêlure' to Freud's death-drive in *La Bête humaine* Gilles Deleuze remarks that 'for Freud, sadism is the death wish common to all, which is directed to a person rather than one self'.⁴² Jacques's control of women veils an anxiety which originates again from sexuality. He also suffers from an image disorder; he is delusional and experiences a feeling of worthlessness. When the narrator introduces Jacques he represents him as having: 'des petites mains [...] petites et souples' (*La Bête humaine*, p. 1026). This suggests that Jacques has remained a boy, given the softness and smallness of his hands. But the narrator is giving his reader a false impression of Jacques: he presents Jacques's inner character as having 'un trouble singulier' which is caused by 'une sonnerie' as soon as he sees women. On sighting them Jacques's psyche provokes 'un grondement de [...] tempête' in him (p. 1029).

Jacques is described as a nice young man; the reader 'sees' him as a twenty-six year old man with a smart appearance, good-looking, and polite: 'on aurait dit un monsieur à sa peau fine, bien rasée sur les joues' (p. 1026). But this appearance is an illusion: his 'trouble singulier' is at once detected when he approaches Flore, his cousin. Flore is the first woman

⁴¹ Quoted in Gabbard and others (eds.), *Oxford Textbook of Psychotherapy*, p. 165.

⁴² Deleuze, 'Zola et la fêlure'.

whom he meets in this novel and at the sight of her breasts Jacques turns into a different person (his repressed memory is re-activated): Jacques's eyes 's'étaient troublés d'une fumée rousse qui les pâlassait. Les paupières battirent, les yeux se détournèrent, dans une gêne subite, un malaise allant jusqu'à la souffrance. Et tout le corps lui-même avait eu un instinctif mouvement de recul' (p. 1026). In this passage, Jacques has the potential to turn into the ripper: for example, he gets agitated as soon as he sees a woman, 'chaque fois qu'il abordait une femme', and his needs are to kill her and to rip her apart, to 'éventrer la femelle', his inner bestiality emerges. Geoff Woollen questions if Zola copied the theme of this novel from Camille Lemonnier's *L'Homme qui tue les femmes* (1893), and remarks that there are parallels between both novels.⁴³ He marvels at Zola for not following Lemonnier's version and for not being impassioned by the true events which happened in Whitechapel in England during the 1880s: 'Mais en dehors de ces juxtapositions flatteuses de son amour-propre, pourquoi un romancier qui se met à écrire l'*Ébauche* de son roman, sur un assassin à la folie lucide [...]?' Woollen argues that Lemonnier's graphic depiction of women's mutilated bodies did not suit Zola, yet he observes that Zola's interest was to highlight and reinforce Jacques's needs to 'tuer, et de tuer une femme' (Woollen, p. 170). Jacques's sadism may also be related to Zola's fears of female sexuality which he then relates to their 'fêlure' as he understood it, and which, as he believed, formed part of their biological nature.

Jacques, like Serge, shows symptoms of schizophrenia in that he has two personalities which have emerged from trauma.⁴⁴ As Serge turns to the Church in an attempt to resolve his inner conflict, driving the train makes Jacques believe he is in control and is superior to women, given the height at which the train driver sits. Indeed, the train is, for Jacques, symbolic of the phallus, as is the knife, which penetrates women and in so doing murders them. Peter Brooks believes that there is a relationship between Jacques's erotic desires, in La

⁴³ Geoff Woollen, 'Une nouvelle de Camille Lemonnier: de 'Jacques l'Éventreur' à *La Bête humaine*?', *Les Cahiers Naturalistes*, 69 (1995), 170.

⁴⁴ See Gabbard and others (eds.), *Oxford Textbook of Psychotherapy*, p. 165.

Lison, with his aggressive one when he murders Séverine.⁴⁵ Larry Duffy also links this desire to the thermodynamic principle which he believes exists in this novel between the death instinct and the pleasure instinct.⁴⁶ For Duffy, this relationship rests in the 'equilibrium', or in the 'energy' that is being transferred between these two principles. Duffy's comparison of this novel's energy to 'thermodynamic equilibrium' is also associated with the 'fêlure'. This is symbolically represented in the train, La Lison. In this novel, La Lison is feminized, as alluded to by the narrator: 'Jacques prenait un plaisir à la froter' (*La Bête humaine*, p. 1044). His relationship with La Lison is paralleled in his relationship with Séverine; both are 'female' and both present a crack, a 'fêlure'; for La Lison, this is manifested in the accident scene 'La Lison, éventrée, culbutée à gauche par-dessus le fardier'. La Lison is punished because '[elle] n'obéissait pas, allait quand même, à peine ralentie. Elle n'était plus la docile d'autrefois' (pp. 1259-60). For Séverine, the 'fêlure' has been preconceived by Zola in his planning of the *Rougon-Macquart* series. As result, the novel's thermodynamic energy is found in the link which exists between the pleasure principle and the death-drive in the *Rougon-Macquart* novels.

Like Serge who is confronted with his own sexuality when seeing a 'vision' of Albine, Jacques also has a sexually related vision because it is Séverine who participates, with the help of Roubaud, in the murder of Grandmorin. Both visions put into motion their infantile sexuality. For Jacques, it is the train's rapid entrance into the tunnel, disturbing him from his dismal thoughts, as well as Séverine's 'killing' of Grandmorin, that awaken his sadistic impulses towards women. The train's entrance has an important function in this scene and in the novel as a whole: this particular scene enhances the cinematographic features of the novel, but its essential function is to emphasize the latent incestuous desire that Jacques holds for the maternal, as well as reinforcing his jealousy of the father. For example, when Jacques

⁴⁵ Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), pp. 37-45.

⁴⁶ Duffy, *Beyond the Pressure Principle*.

witnesses the murder of Grandmorin, he is in fact witnessing the 'primal scene'. In psychoanalytic terms, Jacques is 'jealous' since he has received no infantile pleasure from his mother's nurture. In contrast to Serge's psychological process of womb appropriation, Jacques's ways are violent; he appropriates the mother's womb through murder to gratify his libidinal instincts.

It is worth looking at the significance of the tunnel and examining its role in *La Bête humaine*. Zola's return of the repressed is reflected in his *wish* to 'ouvrir la porte d'épouvante', as Henri Mitterand suggests during his study of this novel.⁴⁷ Whilst reflecting on the character of Jacques, Zola opens the door to the dreaded because through an exposition of Jacques's diseased mind the reader is able to judge to what extent mental illness can affect a person. Nonetheless, Jacques's inhibitions about female sexuality are represented in the depiction of the tunnel and in La Croix de Mauffras's locality. These places provide for Zola imagery with which to depict female genitalia. Whilst walking along the tunnel, Jacques is first attracted to the 'trou' and to the 'haie' (pp. 1037-38) before he sees La Lison entering the tunnel carrying Roubaud and Séverine. Arguably, the hole and the hedge are metonyms for the entrance of the female sexual organ and it is in its hollowness that Jacques, like Serge, wishes to remain. Their juxtaposition with the train entering the tunnel reinforces Jacques's inhibited desires and awakes his libidinal instinct. Yet, Jacques hates women as Flore observes, 'on m'a bien conté que tu abominais les femmes' (p. 1040); his love is for the train, La Lison, on which he can enact a mating ritual by sitting on top of her as she is in motion. His resentment towards women is revived when he sees Flore in the hedge adjoining her house and attempts to murder her with the scissors that Flore was using. His inner bestiality pounces at the sight of her breast: 'Ses regards rencontrèrent les ciseaux, luisant parmi les bouts de corde; [...] et il les aurait enfoncés dans cette gorge nue, entre les deux seins blancs, aux fleurs roses' (p. 1041). The reference to 'fleurs roses' works as a signifier for the nipples since it is juxtaposed with the

⁴⁷ Zola, *La Bête humaine*, in *Les Rougon-Macquart*, IV, 1738.

phrase 'seins blancs'. This emphasizes the unconscious desire to hold and suckle the maternal breasts since Jacques's needs to murder women originate from the repressed. Jacques's observation of Flore's white breast provokes in him the wish to murder or to penetrate Flore with the knife. This sexual violence against the breasts raises the question of incest. I discuss the theory of murder by penetration further down. I wish to analyse first Jacques's needs in relation to the mother figure.

Jacques, in contrast to Serge, represses incestuous desires. This is exemplified in his meeting with Flore. This suggests that sleeping with the mother carries for him a feeling of dread. His initial reaction is to escape from this thought; he therefore runs away from it because he knows it is wrong, (Flore also represents his mother as she is related to him being his cousin). Like a wounded animal, Jacques runs away from his desired prey:

Jacques fuyait dans la nuit mélancolique. Il monta au galop le sentier d'une côte, retomba au fond d'un étroit vallon [...]; il se lança à gauche parmi les broussailles [...]. Brusquement, il dévala, il buta contre la haie du chemin de fer [...] il agonisait là. (*La Bête humaine*, pp. 1041-42)

Jacques is both the predator and the prey as his running away from Flore shows since he has nearly killed her. Jacques wants to 'tuer une femme, tuer une femme' for the 'ancienne injure' that women have created in him (p. 1046). Séverine is his prey; she represents his mother as illustrated by her love for him, but also because he is jealous of her relationship with Roubaud and with Grandmorin (Grandmorin has sexually abused Séverine who was his ward; he is a paedophile because Séverine was just a teenager when he abused her). The repressed is again in evidence here since the narrator is guided by the unconscious in wishing to kill Grandmorin who for him represents the child molester and sexual predator:

Jacques vit d'abord la gueule noire du tunnel s'éclairer; [...]. Puis, dans le fracas qu'elle apportait, ce fut la machine qui en jaillit.

Mais c'était une apparition en coup de foudre [...], les petites vitres carrées des portières [...] firent défiler les compartiments pleins de voyageurs, dans un tel vertige de vitesse que l'œil doutait ensuite des images entrevues. (*La Bête humaine*, pp. 1056-47)

As for Jacques's psyche, the killing of Grandmorin aggravates his killer instincts because it (his psyche) is in fact witnessing, as the reference to 'l'oeil doutait' suggests, the primal scene:

Et Jacques, très distinctement, à ce quart précis de seconde, aperçut, par les glaces flambantes d'un coupé, un homme qui en tenait un autre renversé sur la banquette et qui lui plantait un couteau dans la gorge, tandis qu' [...] une troisième personne, [...] pesait de tout son poids sur les jambes convulsives de l'assassiné. (p. 1047)

Indeed, words like 'plantait', 'couteau', 'gorge', 'jambes' 'convulsives' suggest the act of love-making by the fact that 'couteau' symbolizes the penis; Jacques's psyche is re-witnessing his parents' primal scene because his needs for the maternal and his jealousy of the paternal figure strengthen his infantile inhibited desires. Nana, Jacques's half sister, will also experience this feeling when she witnesses Gervaise and Lantier making love; this will eventually affect her sexuality (see Chapter Four).

Jacques's childlike curiosity (p. 1020) and his wish to re-enter the maternal are reinforced by the reference to Jacques looking at the entrance of the tunnel and considering entering it: 'Jacques s'était relevé sur un coude, réfléchissant, regardant l'entrée noire du tunnel' (p.1043). Jacques's search for the womb is also foreshadowed in the same scene whilst he dashes through the countryside hallucinating that he is in the tunnel-like womb. Indeed, words like 'campagne noire', 'ruisseaux', 'gorges', and 'hanches' reinforce Jacques's wish to remain in it, since the 'campagne noire' provides for him 'un grand silence' and 'une vaste solitude' (p. 1046). The silence and the loneliness of the countryside impart in Jacques the experience of being in the safe and secure maternal womb, as the reference to 'hanches' indicates. Unlike Serge, Jacques flees this fantasy; this is depicted in his refusal to look back at the object of his desire. Such refusal to acknowledge this desire reflects an Orpheus complex; Jacques suffers from an inability to move away from the maternal because his wish is to replace his father by penetrating his mother with the knife. Jacques eventually penetrates/kills Séverine after having satisfied that desire (this is discussed in Part Two). Furthermore, the scene where Grandmorin is murdered highlights Jacques's fears of the father figure because

he does not understand what is happening: 'il ne comprit pas d'abord'. Indeed, Jacques is 'terrifié' (p. 1042); his unconscious thinks his father is reprimanding him for wishing to sleep with the mother. This is illustrated in the same passage by the train's entrance: 'un train arrivait, grondant, flambant'. The image of himself as the only person to penetrate the mother belongs to the dream. In Serge's case, this is apparent when he manifests a jealousy towards the painted figures that cover Albine's wall. These figures have inhabited Albine's room. This shows Serge's jealousy towards the father's sexual empowerment of the mother (*La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret*, p. 1288), as it does with Jacques. Jacques is jealous and hostile towards the father figure for a while and realises that it is the knife and the scissors that empower him over the female because they replace his phallus. Jacques's violence towards women also functions as a response that seeks authority over them. He thus establishes a relationship with the father even if he is jealous of the primal scene. In warding off this threat, Jacques's schizophrenic personality emerges. It is useful to look at the psychoanalytic understanding of murder by penetration to show the link between killing with a knife and sexual penetration in this novel.

In her studies on gender envy, Karen Horney considers the process of womb-appropriation in men; she alludes to Ferenczi's genital theory, in which, she argues:

The real incitement to coitus, its true ultimate meaning for both sexes is sought in the desire to return to the mother's womb. During a period of contest, man acquires the privilege of really penetrating once more by means of his genital organ, into the uterus. Bettelheim also believes that males, both elders and the young, could satisfy, at least in part, certain parturient yearnings, and act out jealousy and fears in a controlled manner.⁴⁸

Jacques penetrates/murders Séverine because he is jealous of his 'father' and thus has 'a contest' with him in using the knife, which symbolizes the phallus, to murder Séverine because she has 'betrayed' him. This symbolic thrusting is reinforced by the image of the train entering the tunnel since he believes he sees 'his father' (Roubaud) penetrating his 'mother' (Séverine).

⁴⁸ Karen Horney, *Gender Envy*, ed. by Nancy Burke (New York: Routledge, 1998), pp. 131 and 183.

Jacques's jealousy and fears towards the father are reinforced by the rapid flight of ideas that this scene conveys to him: the father, the mother, and the primal scene. This image does not simply reinforce Jacques's fears of the father-figure, but also his inferiority complex towards that figure: 'Jacques vit d'abord la gueule noire du tunnel s'éclairer, ainsi que la bouche d'un four, où des fagots s'embrasent' (p. 1046). The train's entrance, with its rapid movements and noisy and fiery elements, suggests the anger of the father whose forbidding presence Jacques flees. Jacques wonders if he has seen a vision; this foregrounds the dream/hallucination elements that this novel conveys in relation to sexual inhibitions.

With regard to how mental illness was viewed in nineteenth-century France, Lisa Downing provides an interesting analysis on this subject: for Downing, Jacques is a 'destructive monomaniac, the otherwise "normal" subject found himself in the grip of a single-minded and overwhelming urges to kill'. Downing sees 'Naturalism as rooted in the "sexual psychopathology" of its creator' and argues that 'artists and writers [...] bear strong a resemblance to the mentally ill'.⁴⁹ Indeed, Zola's sexual anxieties are reflected in Jacques, who, like his creator, suffers from an inferiority complex with regard to the father figure, and this complex is the result of his repressed incestuous desires.⁵⁰ Jacques's inferiority complex covers up the incestuous desires. When Jacques sees the train entering the tunnel he compares it to his train; La Lison replaces the woman for him or the lover: 'Et c'était pour cela qu'il aimait si fort sa machine, à l'égal d'une maîtresse apaisante'. Jacques rides La Lison as he would a woman in sexual terms and 'ejaculates' in 'her', 'il prenait un plaisir à la frotter' (p. 1044). Given his unresolved sexuality, Jacques fulfils his libido through the train because it also gives him an invincibility over women, as this feeling reinforces his wish to tear the womb and

⁴⁹ Lisa Downing, *The Subject of Murder: Gender, Exceptionality, and the Modern Killer* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2013), p. 82. See also by the same author, *Desiring the Dead: The Necrophilic Aesthetic in Nineteenth-Century French Literature* (Oxford: Legenda, 2003). In this work, Downing explores a complex thematic issue in order to understand certain sexual aesthetics in the discourse of murderers as beast in French literary texts.

⁵⁰ For an interesting analysis of the effect of the inferiority complex, see Brady, *Le Bouc émissaire chez Zola*, pp. 73-74.

ejaculate at the same time. This is alluded to when the narrator describes the train in Le Havre station about to depart and penetrate its respective tunnel: 'Immobile, la machine de l'express perdait par une soupape un grand jet de vapeur [...] semant de larmes blanches le deuil sans bornes tendu au ciel' (p. 1022). Violence against women, when related to Jacques's psychosis, is also suggested; this is reflected when the narrator portrays the trains in their stations as personifications of men raping women, where their 'cris aigus de femme qu'on violente' are imaginatively heard. This is further emphasized by the 'respirations géantes, haletantes de fièvre' that the trains (men) express as a figure of speech (p. 1022). This metaphor does not simply have a sexual connotation of the train ejaculating a jet of white steam, but also functions as a metaphor for pre-empting Séverine's murder in La Croix de Mauffras. Indeed, the words 'semant' and 'larmes blanches' are signifiers for Jacques's ejaculating into Séverine and presage her murder, as do 'éventrée' and 'deuil'. The representation of Jacques as the train driver suggests his invincible sexual strength as only a reflection of his prowess. In fact, Jacques's work as a train driver gives him the control of a big engine, a clear signifier of the penis. This need strengthens the inferiority complex as it gratifies sexual sadistic impulses which were not met. In 'driving' La Lison and entering her tunnel Jacques imposes his will on the train and on women.

In order to tame and control his objects of desire (Séverine and La Lison), Jacques figuratively disembowels her by penetrating her. This is illustrated in Chapter Ten of this novel, and is characterized by the train accident (pp. 1259-60). In this scene, the train is personified and it/she is 'éventrée' as punishment for being female (La Lison) and for encouraging adulterous sex by transporting initially Grandmorin and Séverine to La Croix de Mauffras, then Jacques and Séverine. The reference to 'éventrée' reinforces Deleuze's relationship between the death-drive, 'fêlure', and heredity. Indeed, in this novel, there is a relationship between the erotic and the aggressive drive which is related to the inherited 'fêlure'. The reference to 'éventrée' in this novel is also related to Alfred Alder's theory of aggression and Patrick Brady's

theory of the inferiority complex.⁵¹ Alder proposes that aggression in male society is ‘innate’ and is a ‘primary instinctual drive’. The concept of aggressive drive, according to Alder, stems from an aggressive ‘masculine protest against feelings of inferiority, sexuality being reduced to the man’s aggressive attempt to murder the woman’.⁵² Although Serge is not really aggressive towards Albine, he nonetheless reflects an inferiority complex in her company because she has the capacity to reproduce. Serge hence unites with the male to strengthen his masculinity at the cost of his relationship with Albine. Jacques, as shown, is aggressive; it is also his inferiority complex that leads him to murder Séverine because for him she is also equal in his murderous lust, given her complicity in the murder of Grandmorin, and thus, Jacques needs to sever the bond with the maternal by killing Séverine; her name is linked to the verb *sevrer* in French, or ‘to wean’ in English. In killing Séverine, Jacques cuts the maternal bond and enters the phallic stage.

According to Danièle Franchi and Roger Ripoll, Séverine’s sweet and passionate nature emphasizes her role as the victim who seduces by her sweetness.⁵³ However, Franchi and Ripoll question if Séverine has another personality which Zola reveals through her description. They believe that: ‘Chez Séverine, la douceur est constamment associée aux yeux bleus, tandis que la chevelure, aux couleurs fortement contrastées, révèlent l’héroïne passionnée d’une aventure sinistre’ (p. 82). For them, Séverine has a ‘double nature qui est perçue [...] par Roubaud’ (Ripoll, p. 82). Arguably, Zola compares Séverine’s physique to a female vampire as reflected by her description : ‘Le noir reflet de sa chevelure assombrissait ses calmes yeux de pervenche, sa bouche forte saignait dans le doux ovale de son visage’ as the verbs ‘assombrissait’ and ‘saignait’ suggest (*La Bête humaine*, p. 1011). This image strengthens the

⁵¹ Ibid., pp. 73-74.

⁵² Johann M.G. Van der Dennen, *Psychoanalytic Theories of Aggression*, <<http://rint.rechten.rug.nl/rht/dennen/a-panal.htm>> [accessed February 2013], pp. 22-25.

⁵³ Danièle Franchi and Roger Ripoll, ‘Douceur et intimité dans “La Bête humaine”’, *Cahiers Naturalistes*, 50-51 (1976-77), 82.

narrator's views regarding women and his fears over their sexuality.⁵⁴ Séverine's double nature is illustrated in her complicity with Roubaud to kill Grandmorin and later in her wish to kill Roubaud as well.

Jacques is successful when he murders Séverine because he has managed to penetrate both her vagina and her throat and by this act gratifies his sexual, sadistic impulses and feels 'invincible'. By this time, Jacques is approaching the final stage of infantile sexuality: the phallic phase. Jacques's wish to rip women up accentuates his symptoms of the œdipal complex and, by this, covers up incestuous desire. I discuss below Jacques's murder of Séverine and Serge's desertion and rejection of Albine, who consequently dies of a broken heart.

⁵⁴ See Vernon Rosario, *The Erotic Imagination*

Part 2 The Phallic Stage, or the Alienation Process

In this part I demonstrate that the phallic stage, the one in which both protagonists pass through a process of individuation, determines the fate of Zola's women since it unites the protagonists in both novels with their male counterparts. This third area of the present study in infantile sexual development in relation to Serge and Jacques investigates the process of separation (since Serge and Jacques mirror the maternal in Albine and Séverine respectively), and argues that the ways in which Serge and Jacques sever their attachment to the maternal is synonymous with the murder and desertion of the female characters.

The last chapters in both novels convey the dream element. In those passages, Serge and Jacques wake from their dreams in which they have satisfied their sexual libido. First Serge and then Jacques detach themselves from the image of the mother and both adopt an air of 'parfaite tranquillité' (*La Bête humaine*, p. 1304); Serge and Jacques assume this attitude after Séverine and Albine die. This apparent air of peacefulness is projected also in the 'indifférence' and lack of 'remords' which both adopt towards Albine and Séverine, having gratified their sexual impulses. For Serge, this happens when he has had sex with Albine; the indifference and the lack of remorse reinforce Serge's process of infantile sexuality which he experienced during dreams, after which he 'wakes up' and does not remember: 'Où avait-il vu ce pays? De quel rêve s'éveillait-il?' (*La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret*, p. 1414). As for Jacques, he also wakes from his infantile dream after he has murdered Séverine: 'Comme s'il fût sorti d'un songe, Jacques tressaillit' (*La Bête humaine*, p. 1306). Through their 'awakening', both Serge and Jacques reach a state of independence from the image of their mother. For Serge and for Jacques, this process is achieved through a transition from darkness to light, or from the unconscious to the conscious. This process reinforces the aspect of dreams occurring in both the novels; in other words, Jacques and Serge wake up from their 'rêve obsédant'.⁵⁵ Freud states that these types of neurotic 'sufferers' who recover from 'a delirium [...] quite often say

⁵⁵ Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, p. 77.

that the entire period of their sickness seems like a dream to them, and often a not unpleasant one'. For Freud, and for Radestock, 'madness, an abnormal, pathological phenomenon, is to be regarded as an intensification of the normal, periodically, recurring state of dreaming'.⁵⁶

Towards the end of both novels, Serge and Jacques activate a symbolic, or symbiotic, relationship with male characters who project for them the images of their father. This symbiotic relationship is mirrored in the identification with Frère Archangias and the Church in *La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret* and in Roubaud in *La Bête humaine*. It is also needed in order to 'éventrer les femelles' (*La Bête humaine*, p. 1044) — together, they will do justice to their male egos as they see fit. In effacing Albine and Séverine from their minds, Serge and Jacques highlight a necessity to hide their own repressions and to unite with the father to murder the mother, the one who has slept with the father. This action does not simply demonstrate jealousy, but also reflects aggressive attitudes towards the maternal. In so doing, both unite with the male figure to pronounce a death sentence against women and hence satisfy the 'offenses très anciennes' (*La Bête humaine*, p. 1044) initiated by Adelaïde, Thérèse and Madeleine. The punishment of women who cross over from their native clan in order to mate with a male from another clan has been examined by Freud who remarks that: '[T]he violation [...] is avenged in the most energetic fashion by the whole clan, as though it were of averting some danger that threatened the whole community'. A few sentences later, Freud quotes Frazer who comments that 'in Australia the regular penalty for sexual intercourse with a person of a forbidden clan is death'.⁵⁷ Séverine, Albine, and other female protagonists of the *Rougon-Macquart* novels undergo the same punishment for enjoying their sexuality.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, trans. by James Strachey (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 1989), p. 7

2.1 Serge's and Jacques's Narcissistic Personality Disorder

The mechanism of individuation from the maternal is initiated by Jacques's and Serge's abrupt severance from their object of desire. For both, waking from their dream 'compensates for the limitation of consciousness by making recurrent contribution to the individuation process'.⁵⁸ Karl Jung's theory on how the unconscious works functions well for both Serge and Jacques since the elements of their self-realisation compensate for the limitation of consciousness whilst asleep. In other words, waking from their dreams or from the total blankness of their previous oedipal state suggests they have come to terms with their 'contra sexual personality' within which they were previously living.⁵⁹ The division between fantasy (desire for the mother's womb) and reality (impossibility of such desire) emphasizes the mature stage and the detachment from the Oedipus complex. In Serge, this is achieved when he is abruptly pulled out from Le Paradou by Archangias. In this scene, Serge is naked or 'nu' as Archangias points out (*La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret*, p. 1417). The reference to nakedness reinforces his infantile stage. His detachment from the maternal is illustrated when Archangias abruptly removes him from Le Paradou, or the womb: 'Serge, invinciblement marchait sur la brèche. Quand Frère Archangias, d'un geste brutal, l'eut tiré hors du Paradou' (p. 1417). Serge has crossed the boundaries of his desires: he has invincibly satisfied his oedipal needs towards the mother by severing the bond and is now ready to identify with the father. This is depicted in his regained love for God who symbolizes the father for Serge; he is experiencing through this process, a negative Oedipus complex since he identifies with the male figure. In his observations on the absent father, Avi Elrich examines Hamlet's resentment towards Gertrude. For Elrich 'Hamlet identifies with Claudius in order to satisfy a repressed impulse from childhood, the incestuous desire towards Gertrude. In identifying with Claudius, Hamlet believes he is sleeping with his mother'.⁶⁰ Elrich calls this a negative Oedipus complex, one in which Hamlet unconsciously

⁵⁸ Stevens, *Jung: A Short Introduction*, pp. 36, 61 and 81.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

⁶⁰ Avi Elrich, *Hamlet's Absent Father* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977), p. 23.

replaces his father through Claudius. Suffering from the lack of a paternal figure, Serge similarly undergoes a negative Œdipus complex because he wishes to be united or become one with the father, highlighting a wish to be married to the father – the Church or God - and to be impregnated by him, thus obliterating the exclusive relationship he had with the Virgin Mary and Albine:

Il s'était pris d'une dévotion extraordinaire de la Croix, il avait remplacé dans sa chambre la statuette de l'Immaculée-conception par un grand crucifix de bois. [...]. Exalter la Croix, [...]. Il rêvait [...] d'y être couronné d'épines, d'y avoir les membres troués. [...], il finissait par glisser à l'extase [...]. Et la grâce vint, abondante comme une rosée. Il ne fit pas d'effort, il n'eut qu'à plier les genoux pour la recevoir sur le cœur, pour en être trempé jusqu'aux os, d'une façon délicieusement douce. (*La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret*, pp. 1448-49)

This scene is suggestive; it highlights a desire to be 'penetrated' by the cross. This passage presents an image of sodomy emphasized by Serge's wish to be penetrated or to be 'troué' by the 'épines' and the cross. This thought makes him feel overcome with ecstasy whilst genuflecting in order to receive it 'd'une façon délicieusement douce'. In other words, Serge is enjoying this act. An intelligent reader would have perceived the symbolic image of Zola's blasphemy or the sensational effect that the novelist would have wanted to create in shocking his readers; he or she could either have been shocked by or enjoyed such an image. Barbey D'Aurevilly condemned this novel as 'un livre d'intentions scélérates, [...]. Le livre de M. Zola ne révolte point, mais il attire [...]. La société qu'il corrompt a pris goût à ce livre'.⁶¹ In this scene, Serge severs his bond with the mother in order to consolidate with the father; by this act he repossesses the lost father's image and punishes the mother for having castrated the father during intercourse.⁶² Serge's bond with the father is furthermore illustrated in Archangias who also acts as the jealous father/husband, warns him against women and is moreover jealous of the Virgin Mary (pp. 1272-1280). The sexual allusion (or the narrative substitution for a sexual terminology) presented above may be related to the 'nostalgic paternalistic fantasy' as Janet

⁶¹ Quoted by Thorel-Cailleteau (ed.), in *Zola: Textes de Ulbach*, pp. 76-77.

⁶² Elrich, *Hamlet's Absent Father*, p. 73.

Beizer remarks.⁶³ Christopher Prendergast also argues that the roots of mimesis are to be found in 'the profound psychic connection between the principle of mimesis and precisely, the desire for mastery.'⁶⁴ Zola lost his father at a young age; it is possible that this loss created that type of fantasy in his creative world.

In Jacques's case, the individuation process is highlighted in his desire to imitate the father and replace him. It is in witnessing Grandmorin's murder that Jacques is spurred on to murder Séverine. This act serves two functions: it represents on the one hand Jacques's replacement of the father's displacement carried out by Séverine (she holds Grandmorin so that Roubaud kills him); and, on the other hand, Jacques kills Séverine because she betrayed Roubaud with both Grandmorin, and him; indeed Jacques identifies with both his mirror parents in their murderous nature. The wish to identify (and be penetrated by the father's image) with Roubaud is again illustrated in Jacques when he shadows Roubaud in the railway station. Both work in the railway station: Roubaud directs, and Serge drives, La Lison. The symbolic mechanism between directing a train and driving it reinforces the phallic image that the train conveys and, and thus strengthens the process of male consolidation between father and son.

Returning to male consolidation, Jacques fulfils Roubaud's (the father's) wishes in murdering Séverine. This is highlighted when Roubaud is beside himself after she has confessed to her relationship with Grandmorin: 'La fureur de Roubaud ne se calmait point [...] Il ne se possédait plus, battait le vide [...] retombant à l'unique besoin d'apaiser la bête hurlante au fond de lui' (p. 1017).

Jacques's need for self-completion and detachment from the mother is satisfied by the murder of Séverine. In his study on the bond that exists between mother and child, Nicolas Abraham remarks that although the child goes through a process of individuation from the maternal, the child remains undivided from the mother because it inherits his or her mother's

⁶³ Janet Beizer, *Balzac's Narrative Generations* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986).

⁶⁴ Christopher Prendergast, *Balzac: Fiction and Melodrama* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1978), p. 181.

mental and or physical traits.⁶⁵ Jacques remains undivided from Séverine because she, like him, has also killed; this reinforces Ripoll's and Franchi's observations regarding Séverine's double personality (see above). In fact, for Jacques she has killed twice: once in participating in the murder of Grandmorin, and twice in the figurative murder of both Jacques and Roubaud in her betrayal of both. Jacques kills her for the 'offenses très anciennes, dont il aurait perdu l'exacte mémoire, cette rancune amassée de mâle en mâle' (p. 1044). As well as exacting revenge for the betrayal that the males suffered, Jacques also carries out what Roubaud and Grandmorin did, ejaculating into Séverine/the mother by penetrating her neck, or by slashing it, and then seeing her blood which 'ruisselait entre les seins, [et] s'épandait sur son ventre jusqu'à une cuisse, d'où il retombait en grosses gouttes sur le parquet' (p. 1297). The image of Jacques ejaculating is suggested by the references to 'épandait', 'ventre', and 'cuisse'. The vision of the sperm gushing out (like the blood gushes out over Séverine's throat) is reinforced by the feeling of an 'aiguillon si vif que sa chair en brûlait' (p. 1051). Jacques has sadistically gratified his repressed libido in murdering Séverine. In his article on serial killers, Mark Seltzer shows how serial killers 'assert their identity through ecstatic interpenetration in the act of murder. In the act of murder, the serial killer becomes a self'.⁶⁶ Indeed, in murdering Séverine and seeing the blood gushing out, Jacques gains sexual gratification because the sight of blood gives him the power of life and death over his victim and thus reinforces his narcissistic super-ego in 'engaging in an ecstatic interpenetration' with his victim (Seltzer, p. 6).

⁶⁵ Abraham and Torok, *L'Écorce et le noyau*, pp. 334-59.

⁶⁶ Mark Seltzer, *Serial Killer and the Postmodern Self* (article held at the University of Exeter repository files, no date made available), p. 4, <<http://people.exeter.ac.uk/acking/Papers/Serial4.doc>> [accessed May 2013].

2.2 Albine and Séverine: Zola's Artistic Victims

Le Paradou is a place that belongs to Albine since it is fertile, as shown by its '[v]aste champ poussant à l'abandon depuis un siècle' where 'le vent semait des fleurs les plus rares. [...] La végétation y était énorme, superbe, puissamment inculte' (*La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret*, p. 1345). The garden, like Albine's nature, is unruly and, in contrast to the Virgin Mary's garden, is not chaste. Indeed, Le Paradou produces plants that do not shy away from 'copulating' as they are, like Albine, 'dévergond [ées]' as compared to by the narrator when making allusion to the 'dévergondage des plates-bandes et des corbeilles' (p. 1347).

The description of Le Paradou and its wild and unchaste flora has an analogy with that of an untamed female in Zola's psyche as the above quotation indicates. Zola juxtaposes the description of a wild garden to that of Albine's wild and rustic personality, as he associates the flora's feminine and sexual nature with Albine. Albine is part of the garden since its flora's uninhibited nature opens its flowerbed to Serge and sends its scents to tempt him to have sex with Albine. The analogy between femininity and flora is reinforced in the comparison of its flowers to a 'chevelure immense de verdure [qui] faisait songer à une fille géante, pâmée au loin sur les reins, renversant la tête dans un spasme de passion' (p. 1347). The allusion refers to the decadent literary imagination which prevailed at this time; this is further strengthened by the flowerbed 'enjoying' a symbolic coitus and is paralleled with Albine's feminine scent which resembles in the narrator's psyche 'un grand bouquet d'une odeur forte' (p. 1253).

As Zola's victim, Albine falls prey to Serge's schizophrenia and neuroticism: he projects 'systematized persecutory delusions' in believing that Albine is the reason for his guilt.⁶⁷ This is illustrated when she tries to retrieve him from the Church and begs him to return to her, but Serge has already reached that stage of independence from her. 'Le prêtre ne semblait plus entendre. Il s'était remis en prières, demandant au ciel le courage des saints. Avant d'engager la lutte suprême, il s'armait des épées flamboyantes de la foi' (p. 1463). By arming himself with

⁶⁷ See Gabbard and others (eds.), *Oxford Textbook of Psychotherapy*, p. 165. See also note 49, Lisa Downing's argument for the link that exists between writers and sexual psychopathology in Naturalism.

imaginary swords, Serge's sexual psychosis is reinstated since he believes that this weapon (which symbolizes the father's phallus — God's in this instance, as the reference to 'épées' suggests) will kill Albine. Serge's thoughts highlight a psychotic dynamic mechanism which he utilises in an attempt to rid himself of Albine; for him it is unacceptable (given her symbolic image of motherhood), consecutively resulting in symptoms and signs of psychosis. In addition, owing to this mental disorder, Serge also sees Albine as bestial or as engendering the Sphinx. With the help of the delineation of Le Paradou's 'evil' flora and fauna, Zola also paints Albine as the Sphinx (beside her representation as the Virgin Mary, as highlighted by Desirée too, p. 1457), who swallows Serge and keeps him in her entrails or her womb because he associates her with the 'evil' nature of the garden's flowers and plants (Chapters 13 and 14). In addition, Zola also implies that she has had sexual relations with the tree's 'ceinture d'épais taillis [qui] défailit avec son ombre [Albine's shadow], il n'était plus qu'une volupté' (p. 1409). The metaphor for coitus that the flora and fauna convey, consolidates the images of Albine and Le Paradou as evil since she resides in it and belongs to it; and, according to the narrator, she gratifies her sexual needs through the flora and the fauna. Albine's link with the unruly garden is associated with a malevolent being or with Eve, who is able to absorb men through her hypnotic sexuality. But Albine is not evil, it is men (Archangias, the narrator, and later Serge) who identify her as such, because she challenges their own sexual inhibitions, is fiercely independent, and is in control of her sexuality. Women who presented such characteristics were represented as immoral and venal in the literature and depictions of the time.⁶⁸ I develop this theme in further detail in the following chapter because it is important to the representation of female sexuality.

It is Le Paradou's evil nature that unites with Albine to lure Serge into it and enjoy sex through its flowers' 'promiscuité éhontée' (p. 1231), as the narrator highlights. The scene

⁶⁸ Jean Pierrot, *The Decadent Imagination 1880-1900*, trans. by Derek Coltman (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1981). See also Charles Bernheimer, *Figures of Ill Repute: Representing Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).

where Albine and Serge amble around the garden pre-empts their copulation helped by the flora and fauna whose poisonous feminine odour arouses them and provokes the sexual act. The narrator emphasizes the flower's erotic and captivating smell, and compares the garden to the serpent who tempts Eve, or Albine, in the Garden of Eden. The flowers conspire with the garden/serpent to tempt Serge and Albine:

C'était le jardin qui avait voulu la faute. Pendant des semaines, il s'était prêté au lent apprentissage de leur tendresse. Puis, au dernier jour, il venait de les conduire dans l'alcôve verte. Maintenant il était le tentateur. [...] Du parterre, arrivaient des odeurs de fleurs pamées, [...], les voluptés des violettes; et jamais les sollicitations des héliotropes n'avaient eu une ardeur plus sensuelle. (p. 1407)

Zola views this as fornication - he compares Albine's 'concupiscence' or lust, to that of the flowers and the garden (p. 1408); as well as using the flowers' smell to incite Albine and Serge to copulate, Zola uses the flowers to kill Albine, as their 'sexual' or enticing smell can also kill since they also exude a fatal poison. This is illustrated when Albine prepares her room for her death. Zola covers Albine's sacrificial bed with flowers and sends her to her death: violet and poppies, hyacinth, tubers, and carnations give Albine 'une volupté dernière' before she expires (pp. 1514-16).

Zola punishes Albine because, like Séverine who has tempted Jacques, she has enticed Serge to sin. Ironically, Zola is against celibacy in priests, yet he lets Albine atone for Serge's sexual weaknesses. Although Albine is not part of the Rougon-Macquart family she inherits the 'fêlure' which Zola imputes to women for exercising their sexuality as they wished. Furthermore, Albine's relationship with the flowers also points to her fetishist nature; the flowers replace Serge's sexual desertion, because through them Albine gratifies her sexuality: 'Et jamais le jardin ne l'avait tant aimée [...]. Elle vivrait leur existence jusqu'au bout, jusqu'à leur mort' (p. 1511).

This analysis has shown how the unconscious works in relation to the repressed sexual desires of Zola's male characters. It has used three theories of the unconscious in the study of Serge's and Jacques's return to infantile sexuality, and has demonstrated that infantile sexual

conflicts originated from a lack of maternal nurture and care in both male protagonists. In tracing the protagonists' three phases of infantile psychic development, I have shown that Serge and Jacques reorganized it successfully, albeit at the expense of women.

In Chapter Four, Zola's attitude to female sexuality is examined further with reference to *La Curée* and *Nana*. I will argue that it is reflected in his depiction of women's bodily parts and genitalia and will show that they are treated by the narrator and by his male protagonists as fetishes.

Chapter Four
La Curée and Nana

In this chapter, I also show that the mystery relates, in *La Curée* and *Nana*, to female sexual transgression which principally affects the narrator: the depiction of Renée's and Nana's (sexual) behaviour stages the return of a dispossessed femininity which haunts the novels under consideration. This analysis relates it to fantasy of the unconscious.

This chapter is divided into two parts. Part One considers the role played by prostitution and links nineteenth-century hygienist and medical discourses on female sexuality to the representation of Nana and Renée in *La Curée* and *Nana* respectively. It is necessary to look at the issue of prostitution as it is linked to the novels' themes in that prostitution is evident in *Nana* and implied in *La Curée*. This part demonstrates that medical and hygienist discourses on the topic of prostitution affected principally a Second Empire as well as a Third Republic masculine society, but offered nineteenth-century novelists, poets, and artists an opportunity to represent it as evil and decadent. It argues that this form of narrative structure, in relation to female prostitution, is used by Zola to conceal a weakness and a fear of women's sexual power. Part Two questions the novelist's investigative methods and his empirical observations of his society's ills, and argues that although *La Curée* and *Nana* draw attention to a debauched society, Renée and Nana are victims of the narrator's sexual insecurity and fantasies. Furthermore, it examines to what extent the narrator manifests sadomasochistic desires towards the female body and demonstrates that, together with his male characters, he falls prey to women's sexual attributes: auto-eroticism, voyeurism, and fetishism are all symptomatic of repressed libidinal desires.¹

¹ Sigmund Freud, *On Narcissism: An Introduction*, ed. by Joseph Sandler and others (London: Karnack Books, 2012). See also Robert L. Cagle, 'Auto-Eroticism: Narcissism, Fetishism and Consumer Culture', *Cinema Journal*, 33, 4 (Summer 1994), 23-33.

Part 1 *La Curée* and *Nana*: Empirical Observations of a Decadent Society

For Zola, woman is a mystery. She represents 'la toute puissance du sexe' and her sexuality is symbolized as 'l'inconnu du vaste ciel', as Muffat imagines Nana's genitalia represent (*Nana*, p. 1459).² According to Naomi Schor, woman is for Zola, a 'dark continent'.³ Zola and other novelists of his time for example Honoré de Balzac, Gustave Flaubert, Jules-Amédée Barbey D'Aurevilly, and others, saw woman's sexuality as traumatic, an abyss where men dangerously lose themselves. For these novelists, her mystery lays in her power to absorb men; she represents Circe or Hecate, Hades's companion in the Underworld. She is the harbinger of death. Realist novelists are meant to tell and show the vagaries of their society's ills and focus on facts that are determined by causes rather than myths borrowed from ancient mythology.

In her comparison between Zola's *Nana* and Maupassant's *Jeanne de Lamare*, Agathe Simon argues that 'le roman naturaliste marivaudait avec la fatalité'.⁴ She believes that in realist novels '[l]a fatalité – Eros subjugué par Thanatos – devient ainsi un des enjeux majeurs, tant romanesque que théorique du naturalisme'. Indeed, for her, 'le naturalisme consiste à considérer le désir lui-même comme une fatalité, c'est-à-dire une pulsion qui entraîne la chute du personnage [féminin]' (pp. 129-30). Female sexuality is a 'natural' destructive force for Zola, yet he believes that his naturalist theory encourages progress and understanding of natural phenomenon (see *Le Roman expérimental*). If Zola associates sexual desire in the *Rougon-Macquart* with death, then the argument for his sexual insecurities and anxieties is further strengthened since through this association he betrays his fatalistic attitude towards sexuality. Indeed, Simon highlights the novelist's ambiguity and emphasizes that realist writers are not fatalists.

² Emile Zola, *Nana*, in *Les Rougon-Macquart*, ed. by Henri Mitterand, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 5 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1960-67), II, 1459.

³ Schor, 'Smiles of the Sphinx', p. 29.

⁴ Agathe Simon, 'Désir et fatalité dans le roman naturaliste (Anne Coupeau – Jeanne de Lamare)', *Cahiers Naturalistes*, vol. 78 (2004), 129-30.

Since there is a link between Eros and Thanatos in the *Rougon-Macquart*, Zola's realist discourse 'forgets and lies, but [...] appears to forget its own forgetting and to lie to itself about its own lying' as James Reid also observes.⁵ Reid remarks that the realist discourse tends to incorporate an 'inside and outside polarity', a kind of 'hide and reveal' narrative structure (pp. XI, XII). This chapter highlights this point principally when it relates to Zola's ambiguity in relation to the description of his heroines' characters and their inherited 'fêlure'.

La Curée and *Nana* embody an attack on the bourgeois society of the Second Empire. Zola states in his preparatory notes to *La Curée* that his intention is to highlight the bourgeoisie's moral decline; according to him: 'les besoins du luxe, la vie à outrance, l'empotement de tous les appétits ont aujourd'hui sali et fait tomber les plus fiers'.⁶ Armand Lanoux describes the *Rougon-Macquart* novels as 'une épopée du sexe [...] envisagée comme force sociale'.⁷ Throughout these novels the narrator uses his high-ranking characters' relations with prostitutes to emphasize their bourgeois hypocrisy. Muffat (*Nana*), Chouard (*Nana*), Saccard and Maxime (*La Curée*) are all ridiculed by Zola because they conceal their sexuality behind the facade of their social standing and political rank. This analysis of *Nana* and *La Curée* questions whether Zola was true to the narrator's message in these novels or whether he was using his century's moral decline to gratify his own repressed sexuality in turning Nana and Renée into sexual icons. The following résumé on prostitution in nineteenth-century France should help us to assess to what extent Zola adheres to his naturalist theory in observing and analysing his female protagonists in these novels.

⁵ James Reid, *Narration and Description in the French Realist Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), Introduction, pp. XI-XII and 1.

⁶ Emile Zola, *La Curée*, in *Les Rougon-Macquart*, ed. by Henri Mitterand, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 5 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1960-1967), I, 1577.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. xi.

During the Second Empire, prostitution became endemic. Mélanie Vincelette shows how prostitution was represented in the medical discourse of the time. She highlights syphilis as 'le mal suprême [...] et par extention, les femmes ordurières qui la propagent'.⁸ She refers to Alexandre Parent-Duchâtelet's hygienist debate over prostitution and shows how he links 'la dissection des [syphilitic] cadavres [to] le fonctionnement de l'amour vénal' (pp. 198-99). Parent-Duchâtelet was indeed interested in the link between filth, sewage, and death; he related the filth of sewers to prostitutes in his work on public hygiene. In his work on prostitution, Alain Corbin sums up Parent-Duchâtelet's work and shows as well that prostitution rose at a phenomenal rate to become rampant during the mid-nineteenth century.⁹ Corbin shows that the hygienist's aim was to demonstrate how the social milieu influenced the work of prostitutes. According to Corbin, Parent-Duchâtelet compared prostitutes to 'les égouts, [et] les voiries et les dépôts d'immondices'.¹⁰ Although prostitutes compare to dirty waste for Parent-Duchâtelet, they nonetheless 'contribuent au maintien de l'ordre et de la tranquillité dans la société'.¹¹ Corbin remarks that Parent-Duchâtelet was mainly concerned with low class prostitutes or 'filles publiques' who infiltrated the bourgeoisie through a spread of venereal diseases and perverted well-to-do women and young girls through underhand means. Parent-Duchâtelet saw this class of prostitutes as '[types] qui rentrent dans le monde [...] elles nous entourent [...] elles pénètrent dans nos maisons, dans nos intérieurs' (Corbin, p. 16). Charles Bernheimer also argues that prostitution symbolized the 'sewer, a place of biological decomposition and morbid decay'.¹² He refers, as well, to Parent-Duchâtelet's work and highlights the hygienist's problem with the 'virulence of this illness

⁸ Mélanie Vincelette, 'Libido sciendi. La femme vénale dans le discours du XIX^{ème} Siècle: un regard sur le débat hygiéniste', *Cahiers Naturalistes*, 78 (2004), 193-204.

⁹ Alain Corbin, *Les Filles de noce: misère sexuelle et prostitution (XIX^e et XX^e siècle)* (Paris: Aubier Montaigne, 1978). Corbin summarizes Alexandre Parent-Duchâtelet's discourse on prostitution, *De la prostitution dans la ville de Paris considérée sous les rapports de l'hygiène publique, de la morale et de l'administration*, 2 vols (Paris: J. B. Baillière, 1836).

¹⁰ Corbin, *Les Filles de noce*, pp. 16-17.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Bernheimer, *Figures of Ill-Repute*, p. 16.

(syphilis), transmitted by the vaginal filth of fallen women, [which for Duchâtelet] was naturally linked to the mixture of excremental effluvia' (p. 16). However, Bernheimer states that Zola 'separates Nana from the "moi" – her real self, with the "rien" of her sexual organ [...] of death'. Bernheimer believes that for the novelist, Nana is 'une bonne fille', and that Zola 'seems to engage us to like Nana' (pp. 200-01). For Brian Nelson, 'Nana's body reflects what men perceive as the ultime threat to society and to culture'.¹³ For Zola, Nelson continues, 'Nana represents the disintegration of moral values and family life' (p. 412). I discuss Zola's perceptions of his heroines in Part Two, when I analyse the narrator's portrayal of Nana and Renée and show to what extent they belong to his sexual fantasies.

Returning to Corbin's work on prostitution, the author refers also to the 'discours réglementaristes' in which doctors other than Parent-Duchâtelet fiercely debated the profession of prostitution with a view to controlling and regulating it and thus reducing the risk of sexually-transmitted diseases.¹⁴ Zola reproduces this in *Nana*, when Nana and Satin fear the *police des mœurs* in case they get arrested, as the narrator implies: 'C'était une épouvante de la loi, une terreur de la Préfecture, si grande, que certaines [the prostitutes] restaient paralysées sur la porte des cafés' (*Nana*, p. 1315). Corbin remarks that doctors viewed this threat as mental degeneracy originating from the spread of sexually-transmitted diseases which, for them, would sap the capacity of the nation to defend itself; this was voiced by Doctor Mougeot as 'une menace'.¹⁵ Mougeot criticized the nation for being culpable of neglect and of physical and moral corruption.¹⁶

Bram Dijkstra highlights the issue of prostitution in nineteenth-century France further by studying images of women in the iconography and literature of the time which presented

¹³ Brian Nelson, 'Nana: Uses of the Female Body', *Australian Journal of French Studies*, 38, 3 (September-December 2001), 412.

¹⁴ Corbin, *Les Filles de noce*, p. 22.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 36-47.

female sexuality as a symbol of a decadent and perverted sexuality.¹⁷ Dijkstra also points to doctors who were concerned over the falling rates of marriage: young men were less eager to marry, as they could satisfy their sexual desires through prostitutes who would ‘enable [them] to acquire pernicious habits [...] turning them to debauchery at an early age.’ These concerns were also echoed by Maxime du Camp who feared for ‘the protection of the educated classes’ and campaigned for the police to have stronger powers over prostitutes.¹⁸ Other doctors also voiced their fears over the spread of syphilis in their writings, as represented by Dr Mireur’s work on venereal diseases.¹⁹ Yet, Zola does not make any mention of syphilis in these novels; for example, Maxime and Georges do not catch this disease when they sleep with prostitutes. It is indeed noteworthy that there is no mention of this illness in any of the *Rougon-Macquart* novels. If Zola was worried about venereal diseases and their effects on the male population, he would have highlighted this topical point in his male characters as did Guy de Maupassant for example.²⁰ Furthermore, Dijkstra also points out that these anxieties were in fact attacks directed at women: he remarks that during that period, men held women responsible for their depravity.²¹ However, in comparison to Parent-Duchâtelet’s views on prostitution, Zola sees high-class prostitutes or courtesans in *La Curée* simply as women who take advantage of rich men: for example, Laure D’Aurigny and Blanche Muller are high-class prostitutes who enjoy what should normally belong to well-to-do wives. In making allusions to the jewellery bought for Renée by Saccard from Laure d’Aurigny, Zola’s narrator highlights the covetousness of female guests present at the party given by Renée and Saccard at the beginning of the novel: ‘[E]lles se plainirent de ce que ces filles enlevaient les plus belles choses, bientôt il n’y aurait plus de diamants pour les honnêtes femmes. Et, dans leurs plaintes, perçait le désir de sentir

¹⁷ Bram Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siècle Culture* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 355-57.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Hippolyte Mireur, *La Syphilis et la prostitution à Marseille dans leurs rapports avec l’hygiène, la morale et la loi* (Paris: Masson, Librairie de l’Académie de Médecine, 1875; 2nd edn, 1888).

²⁰ Guy de Maupassant, ‘Auprès d’un mort’, *Gil Blas*, 30 January 1883. Since Maupassant caught and died of syphilis this story highlights, for example, the pain and the ravages that this illness brings in the body.

²¹ Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity*, p. 3.

sur leur peau nue un de ces bijoux que tout Paris avait vus aux épaules d'une impure illustre' (*La Curée*, p. 337). The irony is worth mentioning in this passage in that the wives' hypocrisy is highlighted by the narrator's implied criticism of their selfish needs as the words 'plaignirent', 'diamants', and 'honnêtes' suggest. This comment stresses the novelist's attitude towards the period's hypocrisy and decadence; this is later reinforced by the narrator's point of view in the description of a debauched Paris which suffers from:

[U]ne grande débauche de millions et de femmes. Le vice, venu de haut, coulait dans les ruisseaux [...], tout ce que la brutalité du désir et le contentement immédiat de l'instinct jettent à la rue, après l'avoir brisé et souillé [...]. [...] on sentait le détraquement cérébral, le cauchemar doré et voluptueux d'une ville folle de son or et de sa chair. (*La Curée*, p. 435)

As Bernheimer rightly argues, 'Zola's treatment of prostitution is his manner of dramatically heightening and superimposing the double vision of woman's sexual nature that he inherited from contemporary naturalism'.²² Vincelette also shows that through the representation of the 'greedy' *courtisane* or high-class prostitute, the reader is given a decadent view of nineteenth-century Paris.²³ For Vincelette 'La courtisane, par ses fréquentations, nous donne une coupe transversale de tout Paris' (p. 193). Indeed, Honoré de Balzac, Emile Zola and Jules-Amédée Barbey D'Aurevilly are all adept in treating the topic of prostitution as a figure for female degenerative sexuality.²⁴ For Balzac, the creation of prostitution and courtesans infecting a nineteenth-century male society is associated with clandestinity, deception, and theft. Bernheimer argues that 'since this mobility of representation [...] is fundamental to the modern urban world of media pluralism and commodity capitalism, coding prostitution in male terms can be considered a characteristically modern literary gesture' (p. 70). Bernheimer is making allusion to the malaise that pervaded this period about the 'corporeal condition, one of the persistent characteristics of the spirit of the time' (p. 71). He relates Charles Baudelaire's 'modern view' of female sexuality to a denial

²² Bernheimer, *Figures of Ill Repute*, p. 202.

²³ Vincelette, 'Libido sciendi', p. 193.

²⁴ Ibid.

of woman's natural corporality, referring to Baudelaire's 'Mon coeur mis à nu', a poem which heightens his misogyny by associating woman's nature to the 'abominable'. For Baudelaire, Bernheimer continues, woman 'does not know how to separate the soul from the body; she is simplistic, like an animal [she is the] abominable creature of nature' (pp. 71, 74). For Colette Becker 'le roman Zolien peint les effets ravageurs du désir provoqué en l'homme par le corps et la séduction de la femme'.²⁵ Indeed, the mythical representation of woman's sexuality as degenerate or as devouring of men, undermines Zola's scientific 'progress' in his understanding of the female gender. Catherine Boschnan-Campener argues that Barbey D'Aurevilly's character Vellini, in *Une vieille maîtresse* (1851), Huysmans's Marthe in *Marthe* (1884) and Daudet's Sapho in *Sapho* (1884) created Nana's type. In her work on the representation of the concubine, she highlights D'Aurevilly's fixation with women, who, for the novelist, are adept at entrapping men through their sexuality to the extent of fascinating and bewitching them even in their old age and with an ugly physique. Vellini is described by Kyno, the hero of Barbey D'Aurevilly's *Une vieille maîtresse*, as having 'un visage irrégulier [...] d'une laideur impressive, audacieuse et sombre'.²⁶ D'Aurevilly represents the prostitute as a disfigured sexually thirsty animal - the figure of the sphinx. This representation of female sexuality also functions as a thematic focus in the narrative structures of d'Aurevilly's *Les Diaboliques* (1874).²⁷ Sandrine Harismendy-Lony considers the figure of the prostitute as central to the depiction of female sexuality in realist novels. For her, '[c]es figures féminines fin de siècle se trouvent au centre et en marge d'un milieu essentiellement masculin. Elles sont représentées comme la femme mauvaise'.²⁸

²⁵ Colette Becker, 'La Femme est décidément un abîme', *Excavatio*, 18 (2003). 117.

²⁶ Jules-Amédée Barbey D'Aurevilly, *Une vieille maîtresse*, in *Œuvres romanesques complètes*, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 2 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), I, 268 and 278.

²⁷ Jules-Amédée Barbey D'Aurevilly, 'La Vengeance d'une femme' [1871] and 'À un dîner d'athées' [1867-68], in *Les Diaboliques*, [1874] (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1967).

²⁸ Sandrine Harismendy-Lony, "'Vénus se décomposait.'" Nana, Stella (Nina) et le motif de la ruine', *Excavatio*, 18 (2003), 157.

Returning to Zola's representation of prostitution in these novels, in *Nana*, Zola is interested in working-class prostitutes and, like Parent-Duchâtelet he likens this trade to 'un ferment de destruction' which infects upper-class society (*Nana*, p. 1269). Nana, Satin, Clarisse, Gaga, and Simone represent for Zola the 'mangeuse[s] d'hommes' (p. 1118). Zola attacks working-class prostitutes because for him they are filthy: through Mignon's reference to prostitutes in *Nana*, the narrator is able to emphasize the fact that prostitutes, in this case La Tricon, live in a 'sale endroit' as Mignon highlights (p. 1109). Zola echoes his male character's fears in that for Mignon and for Zola honest women will not exist if low-class prostitutes are allowed to join the theatre. Alluding to *Nana*, Mignon is disgusted (Zola highlights his hypocrisy since his character also uses prostitutes): 'C'est dégoûtant que le public accueille comme ça la première salope venue' (p. 1109). It is true that Zola's fears of the working-class prostitute originate from his worries that *Nana's* sex is capable of controlling all men, thus threatening male patriarchal authority over women and over their sexuality. This is illustrated through the narrator's description of *Nana*: 'Peu à peu, *Nana* avait pris possession du public, et maintenant chaque homme la subissait. Le rut qui montait d'elle, ainsi que d'une bête en folie, s'était répandu toujours d'avantage, emplissant la salle' (p. 1119). The narrator is attracting the attention of his readers to a 'hysterie collective' with which *Nana's* entrance onto the stage provides, as Régine Borderie interprets.²⁹ For Borderie, Zola is attempting in this scene to create confusion in the male's psyche in evoking the imminent entrance of *Nana*. Borderie is right in that Zola is, in this instance, highlighting the effect that *Nana's* sex can have over men; this is reinforced by the word 'rut' and 'fièvre' that *Nana's* sex provokes in the male audience. For Zola and for the narrator, *Nana* is an agent of propagation; she will infect upper and middle-class male society. This is highlighted by the narrator's viewpoint on his female character's sexual capabilities. Indeed, a semi-scientific language is used to underline the effect of 'viral' infection from *Nana*

²⁹Régine Borderie, 'Paroles de groupe dans *Nana*. Les lois de l'imitation', *Cahiers Naturalistes*, 78 (2004), 119-50.

through sexual contact: the words 'possession', 'épandu', and 'emplissant', arguably relate to contamination and symbolize the spreading of infection since their etymological meaning strengthens the effect of dissemination of venereal disease. For Zola and for his narrator, this is fatal in that at this time it was wrongly assumed that it was only the woman and not the man who carried the disease, as the reference to 'possession' and to 'rut' suggest. Even though the narrator is referring to Nana's genitalia and their power to attract and infect her male audience, he is nevertheless part of this group, and, with it, he is also attracted to and eagerly anticipates her imminent semi-naked entrance onto the stage (Nana is wearing, a transparent gauze around her body). The narrator's sexual titillations which he gets from viewing his female character's body through his imagined male audience, stems from a natural sexual drive; yet, this drive is also related to the death-drive since Nana's sex has already been introduced as an agent of propagation in contaminating her male clientele. We could argue that Nana represents the Black Death since for Zola her 'fêlure' is related as well to sewers.

With regard to working-class prostitutes' modes of disrupting family harmony, Zola makes allusion to La Tricon in *Nana* and to Sidonie (Aristide Saccard's sister) in *La Curée*. For him they function as counter-society agents who work to profit from prostitutes as financial commodities. The reference to La Tricon working as an underhand agent in *Nana* is made through the narrator's direct and indirect discourses since, in this instance, we hear the narrator's voice and that of his characters simultaneously. Indeed, through the mixing of these discourses and through their effects, the reader is given a realistic view of how the prostitution market traded. This is illustrated when La Tricon goes to Nana to propose a young man who is eager and who would pay for her services:

- La Tricon ne s'assit même pas. Il n'y eut qu'un échange de paroles brèves.
- J'ai quelqu'un pour vous, aujourd'hui ... Voulez-vous?
 - Oui... Combien?
 - Vingt louis.
 - Et à quelle heure?
 - A trois heures... Alors, affaire entendue?
 - Affaire entendue'. (*Nana*, p. 1125)

In *Sidonie*, Zola highlights her transacting nature in the trading of girls. This is represented in *Sidonie*'s trading of Renée to her brother, Aristide Saccard, and is an example of *Sidonie*'s means to gain financially from him. However, in this example, we only hear the narrator's voice: in discussing the 'sale' of Renée to her brother, the narrator's *discours* emphasizes *Sidonie*'s financial interest whilst assuming the role of a trader in putting Renée on the market: 'elle était en affaire, sa voix prenait les notes métalliques d'une revendeuse qui discute un marché' (*La Curée*, p. 376).

Brian Nelson stresses that Nana's body represents the disintegration of moral values.³⁰ We can see how this anxiety about prostitution and venereal contamination pervaded the nineteenth-century discourse on hygiene and on health. Arguably, Zola, alongside other male writers, artists, and painters, saw fit to capitalize on this topic. Zola and his male contemporaries' worries over the spreading of venereal diseases were indeed genuine, as well as his concerns over the century's decadent and hypocritical behaviour. Although this analysis supports such an approach in identifying sexual anxieties over the spreading of syphilis and over a depraved or debauched society in Zola's fiction, it nonetheless argues that this topic was also used to denigrate women in order to hide male insecurity with regard to female sexuality because it belongs to the author's affects as discussed in Chapter One.

The assimilation of female sexuality with evil and death betrays the French realist theory. Zola appears to have followed Michelet in his misunderstanding of female physiology and the natural process of reproduction. This is reflected in his belief that all women have a 'détraquement nerveux' which in turn is connected to sexuality. For Jules Michelet, women's menstruation was perceived as a 'natural fatality in every woman's life' (Bernheimer, p. 203). For Michelet, woman's menses dictate her mental deficiency. Bernheimer also notes that 'Zola associates [women's] bloody flow with destruction and degeneration' (p. 2013). Adèle in *Pot-*

³⁰ Nelson, 'Nana: Uses of the Female Body', p. 412. See also, *Confronting Modernity in Fin-de-Siècle France*, ed. by Forth and Accampo.

Bouille and Pauline in *La Joie de vivre* are examples of Zola's misinterpretation of his wish to 'analyse' women's natural physiological process of reproduction and present it as natural phenomenon affected by a defective nervous system. The century's medical misunderstanding of the process of reproduction in female sexuality is pertinent and applies to Zola and his contemporaries. Only one of many examples, Courbet's *L'Origine du monde* (1870) reflects a sexual interest over the female genitalia as well as misogyny, denoted by the double connotation that the painting of the female sexual organ conveys in its title and in its drawing: the one to show the creation of humanity through the allusion made to the female organ, and the other to symbolize it as evil. This is represented by the painter's allusion to the Fall of Man (his original sin) as conveyed by the organ's inviting connotation. Yet, this painting also highlights his sexual interest in objectifying the female organ and, by definition, his voyeurism or fetishist attraction to the organ.

With regard to the topic of prostitution which pervaded that century, Balzac also exploits this topic in his fiction. For example, in *La Cousine Bette* he highlights Bette's machinations with regard to using her influence over le baron Hulot so that Madame Marneffe entraps him through her beauty and bankrupts him. Cousine Bette can be compared to Sidonie in so far as they both use their selfish (financial) interest in order to gain from Hulot in Bette's case and from Renée and Saccard in Sidonie's case.³¹ Dijkstra also points out that writers, poets, and painters conveniently depicted man as the helpless victim of a devastating femme fatale. Art was indeed used to publicize one's fantasy of the ravages of female sexuality as Courbet in his painting of the female organ illustrated and as Baudelaire did in *Les Fleurs du mal*.³² As male desires and their 'subsequent' debauchery were blamed on women, these attacks reached a spiteful state. Zola also belongs to this group of artists. This is illustrated by the comparison to a filthy fly that Zola makes about Nana who is described in Fauchery's

³¹ Honoré de Balzac also uses prostitutes as vehicles for political attacks in *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes* [1847], in *La Comédie humaine, Études de mœurs, scènes de la vie parisienne*, vol VI (Paris: Gallimard, 2001).

³² See Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity*.

article as: 'un ferment de destruction [...]. [U]ne mouche couleur de soleil, envolée de l'ordure, une mouche qui prenait la mort sur les charognes tolérées le long des chemins [...], empoisonnait les hommes rien qu'à se poser sur eux' (*Nana*, pp. 1269-70). The narrator is drawing the reader's attention to the filth of prostitution and its relation to sewage.³³

I have given an outline of the patriarchal construct of women during the nineteenth century. I have shown that their 'sexual' behaviour was construed as hysteria, a nervous derangement of the sexual organ, or in Zola's term the 'fêlure', a disease which was believed to be inherent to their biological makeup. This was considered as 'posing a threat to the authority of male sexuality'.³⁴ Zola capitalized on this campaign as a means of shocking his reading public. In Part Two, I give an overview of the fantastic, sensational and scandalous themes which these novels capture as they form part of the century's literary mode of communication in attacking a corrupt social and political milieu.³⁵ In *La Curée* and in *Nana*, however, Zola conceals his insecurity and fears of female sexuality by condemning the Second Empire social ills; he deals with female rather than male sexual repressions: Renée and Nana are stigmatized by Zola not simply because of an inherited 'fêlure' as the principal theme of the *Rougon-Macquart* specifies, but also because they are desirable women who are sexually dominant and in control of their sexuality. An examination of Zola's depiction of Renée and Nana will allow us to understand, in this second part, the novelist's insecurities and fantasies in relation to their sexuality.

³³ The comparison of Nana to a filthy fly can be compared with that of Baudelaire's poem 'Une charogne' in *Les Fleurs du mal*, in that both poet and novelist relate woman's sexuality to sewers and deny her corporality.

³⁴ Nelson, 'Nana: Uses of the Female Body', p. 409.

³⁵ The reference to the fantastic and sensational literature is relevant in this analysis. During the nineteenth century this mode of communication was adopted by novelists in order to attract and shock a reading public. After the end of colportage, novelists were able to use themes which were no more censored. See Part Two for further details.

Part 2 Sadomasochistic Injunctions in *La Curée* and in *Nana*

Brian Nelson rightly remarks that *Nana* is a novel about ‘unveiling [...] male erotic imagination’.³⁶ Through his omniscient narrator, the author creates his heroines as objects of desire in an attempt to satisfy his erotic gaze and fulfil his repressed libido. The analysis below examines to what extent Zola’s erotic imagination is projected in his analysis of Renée and Nana, and to what degree Renée’s and Nana’s fates are determined by the ways their sexuality is interpreted by the narrator.

In her analysis of Zola’s views on *Germinie Lacerteux*, Liza Gabaston argues that Germinie is for Zola, the first ‘cobaye d’un romancier démiurge’.³⁷ Gabaston remarks that for the novelist ‘la question féminine est toujours demeurée pour lui un enjeu esthétique’ (p. 154). For her, Zola creates ‘un discours romanesque par le discours scientifique en devenant un observateur rigoureux’. For Zola, *Germinie Lacerteux* reflects ‘un problème physiologique et psychologique [...] un cas de maladie physique et morale’ (Gabaston, p. 155). Indeed, Zola gives a ‘positive’ view of the novel’s publication:

Je dois déclarer que tout [...] me porte à admirer l’œuvre excessive et fiévreuse que je vais analyser. Je trouve en elle toutes les qualités qui me passionnent.³⁸

Si vous placez cette femme frémissante et forte dans un milieu grossier [...]. Mettez Germinie dans une autre position, et elle ne succombera pas; donnez-lui un mari, des enfants à aimer, et elle sera une excellente épouse et mère. Mais si vous ne lui accordez qu’un amant indigne, si vous tuez son enfant, vous frappez dangereusement sur son cœur vous la poussez à la folie.³⁹

In the first passage, although Zola tells his readers that he is undertaking a ‘scientific’ analysis in *Germinie Lacerteux* we can sense the novelist’s sexual titillation in the examination of this novel. Arguably, the words used to express his warm ‘admiration’ for this novel point to his interest in Germinie’s sexuality. Indeed the words ‘fiévreuse’ and ‘passionnent’, awake sexual

³⁶ Nelson, ‘Nana: Uses of the Female Body’, p. 408.

³⁷ Liza Gabaston, ‘Germinie Lacerteux, première héroïne Zolienne’, *Cahiers Naturalistes*, 78 (2004), 159.

³⁸ As cited by Gabaston, ‘Germinie Lacerteux’, p. 155.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 161.

interest for Germinie. In the second passage, Germinie is for the novelist 'frémissante', in other words she quivers. To quiver arguably implies in this context, sexual enjoyment. This argument is reinforced by the word 'position'. Zola is indeed enjoying Germinie's (sexual) position or stance in the story, through the prism of 'science' which he adopts in analysing this novel, or as Gabaston argues, through Germinie's character, who, for her, 'vient en effet briser un interdit littéraire majeure, à savoir la représentation de la physiologie féminine, soigneusement occultée par l'esthétique romantique' (p. 157). Zola's misconstrued 'medical diagnosis' of Germinie shows that women are not simply easy prey for prostitution since he believes it is inherent in their nature, but also that through his 'scientific' analysis, the novelist can also enjoy this novel as its subject matter relates to female sexuality. Arguably, Zola's analysis of *Germinie Lacerteux* expresses a biased attitude towards Germinie since for him she has a propensity to fall into prostitution if she is not kept under control, as his comments reveal. When referring to Zola's treatment of Germinie, Gabaston also highlights the novelist's wish to alienate her: 'Germinie semble ainsi placée sous le signe de l'aliénation, apanage de l'identité féminine' (p. 161). Zola's scientific interest in Germinie is ambiguous: on the one hand, he enjoys analysing her sexuality, and on the other hand, Germinie must follow the imposed patriarchal rule over sexuality. The novelist's 'scientific' observations of Germinie Lacerteux reflect perverse and sadistic intentions because Germinie has subverted patriarchal rules. We shall see below to what extent the scientific analyses of Renée and Nana project a true depiction of Zola's decadent period.

La Curée and *Nana* are realist novels with regard to Zola's sexual neurosis towards women's unwillingness to conform to patriarchal rules, since they (Nana and Renée) pose a threat to his male prerogatives. Zola depicts both his heroines as 'ferment[s] de destruction' who poison men with their sex. The notion of female sexuality as noxious is primarily symbolized in *Nana* when Muffat is hit by the smell of Nana's dirty undergarments when he visits the *coulisses* of the Théâtre des Variétés (*Nana*, pp. 1223 and 1269). I discuss this

passage in further detail later since it belongs to the libidinal fantasies of Muffat and the narrator. The novelist's 'scientific' observations of Germinie Lacerteux, his analyses of Renée in *La Curée* and of Nana in *Nana* reflect perverse and sadistic intentions since for Zola female sexuality cannot be allowed to thrive because it subverts patriarchal rule. Equally, Zola's women are not allowed to enjoy sex since having an orgasm will give them a 'détrangement nerveux' (*La Curée*, p. 1572) and render them mad. As an example of female nymphomania and consequent fear of female sexuality, Sabine Muffat is delineated as promiscuous and peculiar because she has an affair with Fauchery and is thus able to enjoy sex, something she is unable to do with her husband le comte Muffat. Zola's ambiguity towards Sabine is heightened: this is illustrated in Fauchery's thoughts regarding Sabine. On the one hand Sabine is sexually unappealing as suggested: 'Elle ne couchait avec personne, cela sautait aux yeux. Il suffisait de la voir [...], si nulle et si guindée' (*Nana*, p. 1150). In this passage, Sabine's femininity is deliberately voided, or destroyed since she is not useful in bed as the reference to her sexual frigidity alludes to. On the other hand, Zola indirectly condemns Sabine Muffat because she does not uphold or respect her position as the aristocratic wife of le comte Muffat and daughter of le marquis de Chouard when she sleeps with Fauchery. Zola highlights this when Muffat, having been told by Nana that his wife is betraying him, ponders with anger Sabine's 'clandestine' movements and daring action. In this passage, Zola's irony is noteworthy in that as a republican who seemingly holds open views regarding women's rights, he contradicts his ideals in projecting the period's gendered inequalities:⁴⁰

A mesure qu'il y pensait, l'histoire devenait possible. [...]. Tandis qu'il se mettait en manches de chemise chez une catin, sa femme se déshabillait dans la chambre d'un amant; rien de plus simple ni de plus logique. [...] Il pleurait si violemment, qu'il s'adossa contre une porte. [...]. Des doutes lui revenaient, sa femme ne pouvaient être chez cette homme, c'était monstrueux et impossible. (*Nana*, pp. 1277-79)

⁴⁰ See Charles Sowerwine's work on gender, citizenship, and Republicanism in France, in 'Revising the Sexual Contract: Women's Citizenship and Republicanism in France', in *Confronting Modernity in Fin-de-Siècle France: Bodies, Minds and Gender*, ed. by Christopher Forth and Elinor Accampo (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 169-187. See also, Andrea Mansker, 'Shaming Men: Honor and the Sexual Double Standard in Belle Époque France' in *Confronting Modernity in Fin-de-Siècle France*.

Indeed, Zola sympathizes with Muffat; for him it is impossible that women (mostly upper-class women) do not maintain respect for their title and their husbands. Karen Offen argues that the male public feared for their masculine honour and worried that the assertion of their authority was challenged.⁴¹ She shows that women's voices were multiplying during the Third Republic in order to challenge masculine dominance. Offen also highlights that men felt increasingly insecure with the emergence of feminist critics, and worried about their male supremacy (p. 43).

Despite Zola's double-standards, or his misconstrued analysis, in relation to female sexuality and his fears of female sexual independence, Anna Krakowski is sympathetic to Zola's attitude to women in *Fécondité* (1899).⁴² This novel was written well after Zola had met Jeanne and had two children with her; his views on sexuality had then changed (in Chapters Five and Six I discuss the important changes in the novelist's views of women when I examine *Le Docteur Pascal* and *Vérité*). If Zola had understood women's 'plight' as Krakowski believes, he would have indirectly supported Sabine, since her affair with Fauchery was motivated out of spite against Muffat's relationship with Nana. Zola's ambiguity reveals his and his male contemporaries' insecurities about women's ability to enjoy their sexuality. In comparison to Zola, Balzac punishes le baron Hulot for having brought financial disgrace and dishonour to his wife and family with his lover Madame Marneffe. It is indeed le baron Hulot who does not uphold or respect his title in *La Cousine Bette*. We might argue that Balzac was true to his realist 'project' in this novel in depicting a hypocritical and corrupt upper-class society who manipulates and abuses its patriarchal privileges.

Regarding the scientific discourses on female sexuality, doctors (and possibly Zola and his male contemporaries) also believed that women who had an orgasm were nymphomaniacs: according to Carol Groneman, having an orgasm (for women) was treated as

⁴¹ Karen Offen, 'Is "the Woman Question" Really "the Man Problem"?' in *Confronting Modernity in Fin-de-Siècle France*, 43-56.

⁴² Anna Krakowski, *La Condition de la femme dans l'œuvre d'Émile Zola* (Paris: A.G. Nizet, 1974), p. 62.

a disease which was 'specific to organic disease. The century's diagnosis of nymphomania was based on "excessive" female sexual desire'.⁴³ The belief that female madness originated from the uterus is furthermore emphasized by Sarah Wise. She highlights the story of Lady Lytton who was married to the novelist Lord Edward Bulwer-Lytton who incarcerated his wife in an asylum. Wise points to the correspondence that passed between Doctor Hood (Lady Lytton's doctor who certified her mad) and Lord Lytton who asked the doctor to examine his wife 'as carefully and pathologically as you can her physical state [...]. I also believe [there may be] uterine disease... uterine disease is in itself so often a concurrent malady with cerebral afflictions or morbid delusions of imaginations and that ... would form an additional evidence of diseased intellect'.⁴⁴ Lord Lytton confined his wife to an asylum because she dared challenge him politically and, as an emergent feminist, stood up against his patriarchal rights. It is true that men enjoyed such privileges since women had no rights over their husbands. Krakowski takes a parochial view in her defence of Zola's treatment of women regarding their role in society and thus reinforces the author's narrow-minded views towards them.

Zola, undeniably, veils his real objectives in presenting the readers with an empirical observation of women, as his analysis of Germinie Lacerteux demonstrated. Whilst showing that Nana can embody, simultaneously, Salomé and Venus, forcing her male public to view her in a different light, Agnieszka Tworek remarks that 'Zola, en l'écrivain, séduit ses lecteurs par un jeu de voile qui cache plus qu'il ne révèle', rendering by this game, the image of the 'Blonde Vénus incomplète car le personnage de Nana cache sous le masque de cette Vénus moderne son véritable visage, celui de Salomé'.⁴⁵ It is true that Zola hides rather than reveals when he creates Nana and Renée. Below I show to what extent Zola seduces his readers (a seduction implied by Tworek's evocation of the vocabulary of the strip-tease), and to what degree his

⁴³ Carol Groneman, 'Nymphomania: The Historical Construction of Female Sexuality', in *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 19, 2 (1994), 337-67. See also Nelson, 'Nana: Uses of the Female Body', p. 409.

⁴⁴ Sarah Wise, 'The Woman in Yellow', in *Inconvenient People: Lunacy, Liberty and the Mad-Doctors in Victorian England* (London: Vintage, 2013), p. 234.

⁴⁵ Agnieszka Tworek, 'Nana e (n ana)morphose', *Excavatio*, 19 (2004), 26.

empirical observations of women's bodies turn into erotic games in order to satisfy unfulfilled fantasies regarding female sexuality.

2.1 Renée's Bacchanalias

Adelaïde's sexual 'détraquement' or her 'fêlure' is also passed on to Renée. Indeed, her revelry and her obsession with sex originate from her 'détraquement nerveux' which she inherited through her gender as Zola believes. This analysis emphasizes that Renée's behaviour originates in her traumatic past and unhappy marriage to Aristide Saccard (*La Curée*, p. 334). It is the narrator's discourse that merits an analysis in this part, because the female phantom returns to him in the novels under consideration in this chapter; this is particularly relevant to the sexually explicit episodes that are present in the narratives of *La Curée* and *Nana*.

Renée lives in a self-made fantasy world because of the repressive situation in which she finds herself. The action of the novel revolves around her 'ardent besoin de curiosité inassouvie' (p. 325), her boredom — she tells Maxime, 'vois-tu, je m'ennuie' (p. 323) —, and in her 'tristesse vague' and her 'mélancholie' (p. 326). Indeed, Renée transfers her boredom and curiosity towards sex; in other words, Renée's psychic energy in processing her unfulfilled infantile libido turns into a need to consume sex: her unfulfilled libido 'is channelled onto the ego, giving rise to a form of behaviour that we can call narcissism', as Freud observes.⁴⁶

Renée experiences a sense of loss from the beginning of the action till the end when she goes back to her father's house to die (p. 599). Renée's sadness and inexplicable loss originate from the repressed. This sense of loss gives rise to her curiosity: Renée was confined with her sister Christine in their home, the 'Hotel Béraud' (p. 334). Her mother died when Renée was eight years old; she was then sent to a convent boarding school where she endured a strict upbringing: 'Renée fut oubliée dans une pension' (pp. 379-80). The narrator stops here

⁴⁶ Freud, *Beyond The Pleasure Principle*, pp. 4-5. In Renée's case, her need to perform sex represents an unconscious wish to reconstruct the mother figure as part of a psychic element to her unsatisfied infantile sexual needs. This impulse is implicit Freud's works.

in recounting her story and does not go beyond telling the reader that she gets pregnant at the age of nineteen (p. 380). Renée's lack of maternal nurture, her father's indifference towards her and his inability to communicate with her, along with her confinement in the convent, all contribute to her behaviour. Although the narrator is able to present her thoughts and show some sympathy with his misguided protagonist through the use of *discours indirect libre*, he nonetheless condemns her acts and punishes her by expressing derogatory comments; for the narrator, Renée is 'coupable' even when she was raped by a forty-year old man (p. 380).

Arguably, Renée is stigmatized for her actions because, on the one hand, she transgresses patriarchal laws and, on the other hand, she is sexually appetizing, and through her attractive attributes and her personality she challenges the narrator's desire towards her since she threatens the patriarchal order which he imposes on feminine behaviour. As a result, Renée also inherits the 'fêlure'. Although the reader is told that her mother died young, the narrator is eager to point out that her mother was linked to 'quelque drame secret, dont la blessure saignait toujours, dut assombrir encore la figure grave du magistrat [Renée's father]' (p. 379). We do not know if Renée inherits her mother's secret, but the narrator's comment implies that she does since for Zola she automatically inherits the 'détrangement nerveux', as did Adelaïde due to her holding 'un mystère quelconque' in *La Fortune des Rougon* (p. 41). Ironically, Renée is not part of the Rougon-Macquart family so should not inherit the female heredity. Yet, Zola seems to have been aware of this but still makes sure that she inherits some tainted blood as the reference to her mother's 'drame secret', which is clearly related to sexuality, indicates. This latter argument strengthens the case for the female phantom that haunts Zola's language.

With regard to the inherited vice in respect of Renée's sexuality and to the narrator's point of view about her behaviour, Renée is 'incestuous'. This topic was a taboo subject during Zola's time but belonged to the representation in realist novels as Hannah Thompson shows.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Thompson, *Taboo*.

From the beginning of the novel, the narrator presents Renée as having those ‘vices’; this is illustrated when Maxime reacts to her question in relation to her boredom: ‘Mais, bon Dieu, tu as tout, que veux-tu encore?’ (p. 325). For the narrator, Renée’s sexuality is ‘inassouvie’ (p. 325). Indeed, the narrator disturbs his characters’ conversation to highlight indirectly Renée’s inner incestuous desire towards Maxime. This is alluded to in this passage by the description of Renée’s eyes which hold for the narrator ‘une clarté chaude’ and reveal an ‘ardent besoin de curiosité inassouvie’ (p. 325). Renée’s incestuous desire towards her stepson, which her expressive eyes indicate, as the narrator points out, is reflected through a stream of consciousness: indeed, through this narrative device, the narrator is eager to point the reader to his character’s thoughts and to her ‘sensations de désirs inavouables’, in other words, her desire for incest. This is followed by his reference to the ‘incestes divins’ (p. 326). Renée’s incestuous desire represents for the narrator ‘l’alcôve honteuse et surhumaine’ (p. 326). For him, Renée is conditioned by her female ancestry. Yet, the reader is not told which gene Renée had inherited. For the narrator, Renée represents the ‘Phaedra symptom’ as Albert Gérard rightly argues.⁴⁸ Gérard remarks that Zola intended to compare Renée’s incest to that of Phèdre in Racine’s *Phèdre*. For Gérard, Racine’s tragic heroine ‘had been present long before Zola started work on *La Curée*’ (p. 207). Indeed, Zola mentioned his intentions to Louis Ulbach in highlighting his interest in comparing Renée’s insatiable incestuous needs to those of Phèdre : ‘J’ai voulu, dans cette nouvelle Phèdre, montrer à quel effroyable écroulement on en arrive quand les mœurs sont pourries et que les liens de famille n’existent plus’.⁴⁹ Zola’s comments to Ulbach strengthen his attacks on women and his misogyny because he makes Renée the guilty party in her relationship with Maxime by not condemning his male character. For the narrator, Renée represents Phèdre who was cursed by the gods for her illicit passion

⁴⁸ Albert Gérard, ‘Renée’s Tangled Ancestry: Zola’s *La Curée* and Racine’s *Phèdre*’ in *Narrative Ironies*, ed. by Raymond A. Prier and Gerald Gillespie (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1997), pp. 207-20.

⁴⁹ Quoted in Mitterand, in Emile Zola, *Les Rougon-Macquart*, ed. by Henri Mitterand (Paris: Gallimard, 1960-67), vol I, pp. 1607-8. See also Zola, *Correspondance*, ed. by B.H. Bakker and others, 10 vols, (Montréal: Presse de l’Université de Montréal, 1978-95), II, 259. Letter dated 6 November 1871.

with Hippolyte, Thésée's son, in Racine's *Phèdre*. For Zola, Renée is 'la moins analysable des femmes' (*La Curée*, p. 421). Yet for the narrator she holds 'une honnêteté absolue'. Renée belongs to her father, indeed, she belongs to 'cette race calme et prudente où fleurissent les vertus du foyer' (p. 421). Ironically, the narrator disregards those virtues which are inherent to Renée's ancestral blood because she has an 'insatiable besoin de savoir et de sentir' (p. 422). The narrator's ambiguous irony strengthens his misogyny towards women; this is made evident in his attacks on Renée's independent

The narrator's negative view regarding his character is further reinforced when Renée attends the production of *Phèdre*. In this scene, the narrator highlights Renée's guilt over her incestuous behaviour with Maxime by reflecting her own guilty feeling about it: 'Phèdre était du sang de Pasiphaé, et elle se demandait de quel sang elle pouvait être, elle l'incestueuse des temps nouveaux' (p. 508). Zola does not adhere to his naturalist doctrines in respect of his views on women because he juxtaposes Renée's 'predetermined' heredity with the myth of *Phèdre*. This is incompatible with his scientific project and thus renders his narrator unreliable. Zola 'disdains authors who hypocritically enlist myth [...] to portray the barbaric side of French society' as Holly Woodson Waddell remarks in her comparison of Renée to the myth of *Phèdre* in *La Curée*.⁵⁰ Woodson Waddell finds Zola's use of myth in his novel as 'unexpected', in that Zola does not 'typically define himself as a myth-maker' (p. 143). She believes that for Zola 'there are two kinds of myth: (1) profound myth which conveys human truth and (2) pornographic myth which promotes the male culture of violence [...] serving only as a diversion [...] to expose the female body' (p. 145).

As shown above, Zola attacks Renée for enjoying her sexuality and for being independent; he does this by fictionally representing her as Racine's tragic queen. For Zola, and for his narrator, woman is viewed as object rather than subject. Susan Harrow examines the narrative repetition on the process of objectification of the female body in the description

⁵⁰ Holly Woodson Waddell, 'The Naked Truth: Renée and the Myth of Phaedra in *La Curée*', *Excavatio*, 18 (2003), 143-56.

of Renée.⁵¹ Harrow also argues that the Second Empire patriarchy controls the female body by containing it and shaping it. Renée's body is contained by the narrator. However, her personality resists containment as Harrow further demonstrates and, for Zola, this behaviour threatens his imposed patriarchal-structured order of feminine creation. As punishment, Zola objectifies and 'aestheticize[s] Renée's figure', as Harrow furthermore remarks (p. 252). Renée becomes for Zola and for the narrator '[une] déesse avec sa tête de Diane blonde', a statue which can be simply viewed and desired (*La Curée*, p. 484). Zola's patriarchal idealization of the female body represents his desire to control it and to represent it as an object of male erotic desire.

With all the idealization of Renée's body and his attacks on her sexuality, the narrator expresses, in addition, his frustration through fantasies of sleeping with her. Renée's milieu which, according to the narrator affects her behaviour sexually excites him. This is illustrated when as a curious teenager she provokes, unbeknown to her, her first sexual encounter with an older man. Indeed, through her burgeoning sexuality Renée becomes prey also to the narrator's sexual interest. Edmond de Goncourt remarked that Zola was 'hanté par le désir de coucher avec une jeune fille, pas une enfant, mais une jeune fille qui ne serait pas encore femme'.⁵² The writings of *La Curée* and *Nana* reinforce Goncourt's comments on Zola's sexual, albeit ambivalent interest in young women. A comparison of the novel's opening passage, where Renée experiences a sad dream or, in the narrator's words, a 'triste rêve' whilst returning with Maxime from the Bois, with the last passage where she goes back to her father to die, will help us understand why her 'curiosité inassouvie' has led her to a debauched life:

Elle s'était tout à fait tournée, elle contemplait l'étrange tableau qui s'effaçait derrière elle. La nuit était presque venue; [...] Le lac, vu de face, dans le jour pâle qui traînait encore sur l'eau, s'arrondissait, pareil à une immense plaque d'étain; aux deux bords, les bois d'arbres verts dont les troncs minces et droits semblent sortir de la nappe dormante [...]; puis, au fond, des massifs montaient [...], des larges taches noires

⁵¹ Susan Harrow, 'Myopia and the Model: The Making and Unmaking of Renée in Zola *La Curée*', in *L'Écriture du féminin chez Zola et dans la fiction naturaliste*, ed. by Anna Gural-Migdal (Bern: Peter Lang, 2003), p. 52.

⁵² Quoted by Mitterand, *Zola*, II, 208.

fermaient l'horizon. [...] Au dessus de ce lac immobile, [...], le creux du ciel s'ouvrait [.....]. Ce grand morceau de ciel sur ce petit coin de nature, avait un frisson, une tristesse vague; et il tombait de ces hauteurs pâlissantes une telle mélancolie d'automne, [...] que le Bois peu à peu enveloppé dans un linceul d'ombre, perdait ses grâces mondaines.

Renée, dans ses satiétés, éprouva une singulière sensation de désirs inavouables, à voir ce paysage qu'elle ne reconnaissait plus, cette nature si artistement mondaine, et dont la grande nuit frissonnante faisait un bois sacré, une de ces clairières idéales aux fonds desquelles les anciens dieux cachés leurs amours géantes, leurs adultères et leurs incestes divins. Et, à mesure que la calèche s'éloignait, il lui semblait que le crépuscule emportait derrière elle [...], l'alcôve honteuse et surhumaine où elle eût enfin assouvi son cœur malade, sa chair lassée. (*La Curée*, pp. 325-26)

Renée's innate sadness in this passage is reflected in her contemplation of the landscape that emerges in front of her. This sadness is deep-rooted in her childhood experiences. As a child, Renée's sexual curiosity was denied, as was her need for maternal nurture; having had a strict upbringing and a lack of maternal love and guidance, it is not surprising that she finds herself pregnant at the age of nineteen. It is possible to argue that Renée's sadness over the loss of her unborn child is reflected in the many allusions to water that the narrator makes in this passage. For example, Renée's melancholy towards her miscarriage at four months of gestation is reflected in the 'étrange tableau' that the lake provides her with (p. 325). This delineation is reinforced by the allusion to the still water of the lake, which, with its rounded shape, ('qui s'arrondissait pareil à une immense plaque d'étain'), evokes Renée's past pregnancy. This sentence also points to the figurative loss of her waters which become still and pewter-coloured, whilst surrounding the dead foetus.

The narrator's covert condemnation of his heroine's sin is reflected and pre-empted in the indirect death penalty which is imposed on her through the narrative voice (once again the narrator's ambiguous irony is detected in this later passage). This is mirrored by signifiers that function to prepare Renée for her death: for example, the 'larges taches noires [qui] fermaient l'horizon [...] le creux du ciel s'ouvrait [...] [le] linceul d'ombre [qui] perdait ses grâces mondaines'. All foreshadow Renée's death. This condemnation is alluded to by the narrator at

the end of the novel when she dies, resonating in the darkened shroud which covers her disease-marked body, as the allusion here to the 'linceul d'ombre' indicates (p. 326).

Renée's 'insatiable' sexual needs are alluded to by three phrases which highlight, according to the narrator, her lascivious behaviour: 'incestes divins', 'alcôve honteuse', and 'chair lassée' (p. 326); this would imply that Renée has had so much sex that her libidinal impulses are overwhelmed by the sexual act. Earlier in the novel, Renée was compared to an animal on heat as the description of her 'cheveux fauve pâle' suggests (p. 320). She was described then as half-animal and half-woman: 'Elle attira frileusement à elle un coin de la peau d'ours [...]. Ses mains gantées se perdirent dans la douceur des longs poils frisés' (p. 321). In this passage, Zola's likening of Renée to a bear, a tiger, and/or to the sphinx highlights the century's creative imagination regarding the representation of female sexuality.⁵³ This is reinforced by the narrator's implied fear of her half-woman half-beast nature as suggested by 'longs poils frisés'; he is attracted to her yet still fears her power to 'swallow' him. Although Renée is described as half-woman half-animal, the narrator does make reference to the repressed in the following passage whilst referring to Renée's room in her father's house:

Renée étouffait [...]. Elle ouvrit la fenêtre, elle regarda l'immense paysage. Là, rien n'était sali [...]. Mais ce qui la calmait [...], c'était surtout la Seine, la géante, qu'elle regardait venir du bout de l'horizon, droit à elle [...]. Elle se souvenait de leurs [Renée and her sister's] tendresses pour la rivière, de leur amour de sa coulée colossale, de ce frisson de l'eau grondante, s'étalant, en nappe à leurs pieds, s'ouvrant autour d'elles, derrière elles, en deux bras qu'elles ne voyaient plus, et dont elles sentaient encore la grande et pure caresse. (*La Curée*, pp. 598-99)

The gothic description of the house where Renée was born, and to which she returns to die, serves as the repressed. This is depicted first in the house's austere and dark seventeenth-century architectural design of 'étroites et hautes fenêtres [...] garnies d'énormes barres de fer' (p. 399). These bars symbolize the prison in which she was brought up, the cloistered nature of her bedroom windows which unleashed her curiosity. At the same time, these bars also symbolize the crypt, a place 'inside the subject in which the lost object is

⁵³ Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity*.

swallowed and preserved'.⁵⁴ Arguably, Renée was confined to a 'crypt' by her very strict upbringing: 'Renée étouffait' (p. 598). The bars of her window as well as the 'sombre épaisseur des murs' of her room may represent the tomb in which Renée is 'imprisoned' or restrained. Renée's 'curiosité inassouvie' also originates from the feeling of being buried alive, as the allusion to the bars and sombre wall suggests. We could argue that Renée's inner rebellion during her confinement, both at her father's house, and at the convent is manifested in her desire and her decision to take control of her sexuality. Renée's inner soul goes beyond the 'bars' or borders of patriarchal masculine expectations. Her room in her father's house may be compared to Madeleine's coffin in Edgar Allan Poe's *The Fall of the House of Usher* (1839). In this novel, Madeleine 'escapes' her brothers' imprisonment by coming out of her coffin and facing them (Madeleine was thought to have died). She represents the ghost that comes back to claim a debt, her freedom. Renée's 'liberated soul' returns to haunt the author of this text and belongs too to the female ghost that haunts his fiction. Kate Griffiths's argument about the presence of feminine ghosts in Zola's novels is valid in *La Curée* too, in that the ghost of female sexual empowerment returns to haunt the narrator, because for him it leads to death.⁵⁵ Along with other female characters who rebel against masculine laws, Renée is also 'trapped in the margin of scriptural existence' (Griffiths, p. 57).

Similarly, in the second passage, Renée's past, since 'elle étouffait, au milieu de cet air gâté de son premier âge' (p. 598), highlights the repressed and originates in the loss of childhood innocence, even if the narrator is suggesting that it is her spoilt upbringing that contributed to her depravity. In this scene, Renée is nostalgic for the mother's touch. This is symbolized by the river Seine's back and forth stroking movements which evoke the caresses of the missing mother, figuratively spreading out to Renée and enveloping her. This is represented in the metaphorical phrase 'deux bras qu'elles ne voyaient plus' which suggests the absence of

⁵⁴ Abraham and Torok, *The Wolf Man's Magic Word*, p. 22.

⁵⁵ Griffiths, 'Scribbling Ghosts'.

maternal love, and is emphasized by the phrase 'ne voyaient plus'. In this passage, Zola sympathizes with Renée (somehow to a limited degree) since he also experienced parental loss through the death of his father and was possibly making a connection between Renée's feeling of mourning and his own. Nonetheless, Renée 'unrestrained' sexuality is a concern for the narrator; indeed, since *La Curée* belongs to the *Rougon-Macquart* series, Renée inherits the 'détraiquement nerveux' of Adelaïde and other female characters. Yet, as argued above, Renée Saccard is not a member of the Rougon-Macquart family and is not therefore subject to the laws of heredity which control other female protagonists such as Gervaise, Nana, and Adelaïde: Renée is stigmatized because she is a woman in control of her sexuality and thus creates chaos in the narrator's psyche. Although Zola places Renée within her own social and physical environment, he nonetheless represents her as a woman who needs to fulfil an over-worked sexual impulse and, by this act, associates her with the other females of the *Rougon-Macquart* novels.

As shown, Renée's sexual fantasy stems from her 'curiosité inassouvie' (p. 325). Her unfulfilled desire originates from her insecurity:

'[E]lle remonta d'un saut brusque à son enfance, elle se revit à sept ans, dans l'ombre grave de l'Hotel Béraud. [...] Elle se rappelait bien son enfance. Lorsqu'elle était petite, elle n'avait pas de curiosité. Même plus tard, après ce viol qui l'avait jeté au mal [...]. Qui donc l'avait mise nue? Que faisait-elle dans ce débraillé de fille qui se découvre jusqu'au ventre?'. (*La Curée*, pp. 572–74)

It was her mother who brought her into this world naked, but owing to her mother's death, Renée needs to replace the emptiness that the absence of her mother has created with sexual contact. She replenishes this feeling by identifying with Maxime, in her physical contact with him; Renée makes up for the lack of maternal touch when having sex. We have seen previously, in Chapter Three that this affected also Jacques and Serge and to what extent these male characters coped with the lack of maternal nurturing. Since Renée has not experienced parental love, she fulfils this with Maxime: she re-experiences the lost maternal contact, but also identifies with the father: '[S]on dernier orgueil était d'être mariée au père, mais de n'être que

la femme du fils' (p. 500). Renée's unconscious wish is for Maxime to represent both her mother and father. Renée's intense need to possess Maxime also acts as a replacement for the loss of her child; this is illustrated when Renée first meets him and proposes that he should consider her as his mother: 'Nous serons amis, n'est-ce pas?... Je veux être une mère pour vous. Je réfléchissais à cela' (p. 405). Furthermore, it is she, as the dominant party in this relationship, who identifies with Maxime because he represents the object of her desire; the unconscious need to replace the lost parental love and to provide it as well: 'C'était à l'époque où le désir de cet enfant [Maxime] s'éveillait en elle [...]. Elle y avait vécu, Maxime avait grandi là, à côté d'elle, sur le coussin de sa voiture' (p. 593). Renée's desire to replenish parental love is also reflected in her yearning for her maid Célèste: 'Dans le vide de son être, dans la mélancolie du départ de Célèste, ces souvenirs lui causaient une joie amère' (p. 593). Renée longs for parental contact, she attempts to fulfil this emptiness with Maxime and Célèste. Zola's observations of Renée are projected as an attack on her vulnerability, because for him, Renée is not capable of controlling her sexuality or upholding her aristocratic principles. For Zola, Renée suffers from a 'détraiement nerveux' in her wish to explore and enjoy her sexuality.

2.2 Nana, the Story of the Golden Fly

Nana's story also needs examining. This will help us determine whether she belongs to the naturalists' observations and experimentations or is merely a tool or chimera which Zola and his male protagonists use in order to satisfy their sexual fantasies in relation to women.

For the narrator, as well as for those who surround her, Nana becomes the destructive power which ruins people's lives. For Christopher Rivers, Nana's body and her sexuality are linked.⁵⁶ Rivers demonstrates that 'it is Nana's vagina which is the agent for the entire intrigue of the narrative' (p. 203). Indeed, Nana's body and her sexuality provided Zola with a means to connect venereal disease with sex. For Agathe Simon, Nana 'adopte les fantasmes et les caprices

⁵⁶ Christopher Rivers, *Face Value: Physiognomical Thought and the Legible Body in Marivaux, Lavater, Balzac, Gautier, and Zola* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1994), p. 203.

de son entourage [...]. Nana s'achemine de manière irrégulière vers une issue fatale'.⁵⁷ For the reader, Nana re-enacts her childhood experiences by unconsciously repeating patterns inherited from her family environment which leads to her death.

In his examination of *Nana*, Jean-Michel Lanskin shows to what extent Nana's behaviour is the result of her upbringing in the rue de la Goutte-d'Or.⁵⁸ Lanskin establishes a link between Nana's childhood experiences in *L'Assommoir* and her actions in *Nana*: in his analysis, he shows how the relationship between Nana and her parents influenced her rapport with others and her view of herself by highlighting episodes of *L'Assommoir* that are pertinent to Nana's psychological behaviour. Lanskin refers to the psychiatrist Eric Berne who created '*analyse transactionnelle*', or transactional analysis. In his work, Lanskin follows Berne and also shows how 'les rapports de ces différents états entre diverses personnes sont appelés des transactions qui peuvent être complémentaires ou croisées'.⁵⁹ According to Berne, 'games are ritualistic transactions or behaviour patterns between individuals that can indicate feelings or emotions'.⁶⁰ Micheline Van der Beken also establishes a rapport between Nana's past and her life in the rue de la Goutte-d'Or; she argues that Nana's behaviour is due to having witnessed 'tous les incidents sordides du ménage à trois de ses parents [...] La nuit elle voit sa mère venir de la chambre de son mari à celle de son amant'.⁶¹ In her childhood, Nana was faced with scenes which contributed to her behaviour, and her wish to destroy married couples in *L'Assommoir* stems from the perception of her own parents' marital problems. Silvia Schafer also links Nana's behaviour to her inherited past in the rue de la Goutte-d'Or in her work on abandoned children in nineteenth-century France. Her work revolves around the reformist discourses that the Third

⁵⁷ Simon, 'Désir et fatalité dans le roman naturaliste', p. 135.

⁵⁸ Jean-Michel Charles Lanskin, *Le Scénario sans amour d'une fille de joie: analyse transactionnelle de 'Nana'* (Paris: Lettres Modernes, 1996).

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 265.

⁶⁰ Eric Berne, 'Transactional Analysis', in *Games People Play: The Psychology of Human Relationships* (New York: Grove Press, 1964).

⁶¹ Micheline Van der Beken, *Zola: le dessous des femmes* (Brussels: Le Cri, 2000), p. 80.

Republic implemented regarding parental responsibility.⁶² She also refers to Zola's *Nana* and explains that 'Zola was influenced by the scientific understanding of morality, continually reminded his readers that the demoralized family was certain to produce even more corrupt – and corrupting – children'. For Schafer, 'Nana incarnates her parents' bent for dissolution from the moment of her birth' (p. 98). It is true that Zola highlights the fact that a demoralized working-class family could produce corrupting children, as *L'Assommoir* reflects. However, in order to show how Nana re-enacts her past, this analysis also juxtaposes episodes in both novels and shows how they interact. Nana's *parental* novel, *L'Assommoir*, determines to what extent Nana's lack of care and love will lead her to become 'un ferment de destruction'. Fauchery's article about Nana entitled *La Mouche d'Or* reads:

La chronique de Fauchery, intitulée *La Mouche d'Or*, était l'histoire d'une fille, née de quatre ou cinq générations d'ivrognes, le sang gâté par une longue hérédité de misère et de boisson, qui se transformait chez elle en un détraquement nerveux de son sexe de femme. Elle avait poussé dans un faubourg, sur le pavé parisien; et, grande, belle, de chair superbe ainsi qu'une plante de plein fumier, elle vengeait les gueux et les abandonnés dont elle était le produit. Avec elle, la pourriture qu'on laissait fermenter dans le peuple, remontait et pourrissait l'aristocratie. Elle devenait une force de la nature, un ferment de destruction, sans le vouloir elle-même, corrompant et désorganisant Paris entre ses cuisses de neige. (*Nana*, pp. 1269)

To express his views on female sexuality, the narrator employs a 'medical' language when referring to Nana's pollution of the aristocracy: 'sang gâté, hérédité de misère', and 'détraquement nerveux de son sexe de femme'. In this comment about Nana's prostitution, Zola arguably copies Parent-Duchâtelet's observations on prostitution, principally his (Parent-Duchâtelet's) remarks on sexually-related diseases.⁶³ For Zola, women have a psychological problem, a 'détraquement nerveux', or *nymphomania* because he believes this disease is inherent to their sexuality.⁶⁴ Yet, we can detect an ambiguous irony in that comment on Nana's heredity: on the one hand the narrator guides the reader to Nana's hereditary

⁶² Silvia Schafer, *Children in Moral Danger And the Problem of Government in Third Republic France*, eds. Sherry Ortner and Nicholas Dirks (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997).

⁶³ Parent-Duchâtelet, quoted by Corbin, in *Les Filles de noce*, p. 2.

⁶⁴ See Groneman, 'Nymphomania'.

environment: 'par une longue hérédité de misère [...] elle vengeait les gueux et les abandonnés', and on the other hand, she is described (by Fauchery) as 'une plante de plein fumier qui pourrissait l'aristocratie [by spreading] un ferment de destruction' (p. 1269).

Zola's ambiguities are also detected not only in his views on female sexuality, but also in his attitude towards the aristocracy and the middle class. For Zola, it is the aristocracy and the middle class that suffer the consequences of Nana's sexual exploitation. Indeed, Zola's lenience towards these classes is reinforced by the verbs that he attributes to Nana, who 'empoisonnait' and 'pourrissait' her aristocratic male clients (p. 1269). Zola, contrary to his professed beliefs, supports the bourgeoisie: the verbs *empoisonner* and *pourrir* point to the narrator's biased views towards the working class and imply that this class represents filth and disease. Ironically, it is not Nana who corrupts the bourgeoisie, but the bourgeoisie who corrupts her; in fact, Nana gets fed up with the queue of high-ranking men who line up at her apartment to have sex with her; Zoé, Nana's maid, resents opening doors to her clientèle: 'Madame, je renonce à ouvrir, il y a une queue dans l'escalier' (p. 1143). Although this long passage is comical (pp. 1130-44), it nonetheless points to Nana's future 'poisoning' of the aristocracy because Zola highlights Nana's realization of her 'valuable' commodity with this class.

Although Nana is indifferent to sex, she decides to prostitute her body in order to survive and to satisfy her ego in her elevation to a high-class prostitute, as illustrated by the high-ranking men who wish to sleep with her: le comte Muffat, le marquis de Chouard, Steiner, Georges Hugon, and his brother Philippe Hugon, and others. Nana is attacked because as a working-class woman she realizes the potential power of her sex and infiltrates the nobility to gain financially. For the novelist, Nana belongs to a dangerous class of prostitutes who represent a threat to the bourgeoisie's capacity to reproduce, as already discussed in Part One. Micheline Van der Beken highlights this issue in Zola and remarks that '[l]'image de la prostitution évoque à la fois l'érosion des valeurs traditionnelles et l'érosion

du pouvoir de l'homme sur la femme'.⁶⁵ Zola's realism in relation to female working-class survival and prostitution is ambiguous and inconsistent: it is likely that Zola had a relationship with a prostitute as his semi-biographical novel, *La Confession de Claude* (1865), suggests; in this novel Claude wants to help Laurence and expects her to redeem her 'sins' as a prostitute, but to no avail: Laurence believes that prostituting herself keeps her warm and fed.

Nana's role as a prostitute in *Nana* was pre-conditioned by Zola in *L'Assommoir*. This reinforces the novelist's attitude to women, especially when dealing with their sexuality. In *L'Assommoir*, Zola portrays Nana as 'une gamine vicieuse' (p. 654). This derogatory remark is repeated in the scene when Nana is with Muffat and takes pride and joy in her body as she looks in the mirror: 'Nana s'était absorbée dans son ravissement d'elle-même. Elle pliait le cou, regardant avec attention dans la glace un petit signe brun [...]. Puis, elle étudia d'autres parties de son corps, amusée, reprise de ses curiosités vicieuses d'enfant' (*Nana*, p. 1270, my emphasis). Zola believes Nana is 'vicieuse' because she has inherited her sexuality from her sullied environment, but also because she is in control of her own sexuality and is aware of her desirability as a woman. She is stigmatized because she is using Muffat's (as well as the narrator's) desires for her against them since she leaves them in this passage conflicted and unfulfilled. In this scene, both Muffat and the narrator are fascinated by Nana's body. The narrator captures this moment to emphasize Nana's 'curiosité de gamine vicieuse', but principally to enjoy seeing her naked body, even though he disapproves of the control she has over her it. By the action of discovering her body and enjoying what she sees, Nana's body becomes the active object (or fetish), the one that entices the male gaze and heightens libidinal sublimation. In his letter to Flaubert dated 9 August 1878, Zola declared to his friend that the writing of *Nana* 'sera bien raide'.⁶⁶ We could interpret this as Zola's wish to confess his desires regarding Nana's body to Flaubert. If so, this would underline his fetishist desires

⁶⁵ Van der Beken, *Zola: le dessous des femmes*, p. 131.

⁶⁶ Quoted by Simon in 'Désir et fatalité dans le roman naturaliste', p. 136.

towards female sexuality and women's bodies. Nevertheless, in the scene presented above, Nana subverts the male gaze and becomes the active, rather than passive, sexual partner.

Nana's career as a prostitute is anticipated in *L'Assommoir* as illustrated when Nana, at the age of six, witnesses the love-making of her mother and Lantier, and sees the body of her grandmother lying not far from Gervaise and Lantier:

Gervaise était fort embarrassée d'elle, ne sachant où la [Nana] mettre, en attendant le jour. Elle se décidait à la faire habiller, lorsque Lantier, en pantalon et en pantoufles, vint la rejoindre; [...] il avait un peu honte de sa conduite. Alors tout s'arrangea. "Qu'elle se couche dans mon lit," murmura t-il, "Elle aura de la place". (*L'Assommoir*, p. 654)

Having observed her grandmother's death in the same scene, Nana:

[C]omprit, allongea le menton pour mieux voir sa grand-mère, avec sa curiosité de gamine vicieuse; elle ne disait rien, elle était un peu tremblante, étonnée et satisfaite en face de cette mort qu'elle se promettait depuis deux jours [...]; et, devant ce masque blanc, aminci au dernier hoquet par la passion de la vie, ses prunelles de jeune chatte s'agrandissaient, elle avait cet engourdissement de l'échine dont elle était clouée derrière les vitres de la porte, quand elle allait moucharder là ce qui ne regarde pas les morveuses. (*L'Assommoir*, p. 654)

Nana's attitude to sexuality and to men emerges when she witnesses her mother sleeping with Lantier with the tacit blessing of Coupeau, her father; this experience is one of the factors that contribute to her behaviour. Yet, she sadistically exploits it to her advantage in her womanhood. Sigmund Freud tells us that if a child witnesses parental intercourse: 'they inevitably regard the sexual act as a sort of ill-treatment or act of subjugation; they view it, that is, as a sadistic sense [...] which will contribute [...] towards a predisposition to a subsequent sadistic displacement of the sexual aim'.⁶⁷ Yet, for Zola, Nana is 'vicieuse' because, like a 'couleuvre' [with] 'yeux luisants', she moves into Lantier's bed and there her sexual curiosity begins to burgeon: 'Nana [...] paraissait réfléchir à des affaires' (*L'Assommoir*, p. 655).

Since she witnesses love and death simultaneously, Nana's back and forth movements from her dead grandmother's bed to Lantier's, help her become 'un ferment de destruction', although it is Lantier who perverts her and initiates her curiosity in sex, as his invitation for her

⁶⁷ Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, p. 62.

to sleep in his bed suggests. Zola does not specify it, but Lantier is also described as a paedophile who sexually targets young Nana then aged fourteen; his sexual interest in Nana is reflected in the following sentence: 'Lantier, tout émoustillé, tournait autour de la petite, pour renifler sa bonne odeur' (p. 744). Nana's burgeoning sexuality titillates and excites Lantier (as well as the narrator, as the reference to 'émoustillé', 'bonne odeur', and 'renifler' suggest): this is illustrated when the narrator compares him to a dog on heat, as the references to 'tournait', and 'renifler' shows.

Nana faces up to any situation she finds herself in and confronts it accordingly: 'Chaque fois que sa mère entra, elle la vit les yeux luisant dans sa face muette, ne dormant pas, ne bougeant pas, très rouge et paraissait réfléchir à des affaires' (*L'Assommoir*, p. 655). Nana will later realize the financial benefits that her relationship with Muffat provides; she sadistically exploits men for her survival. If Nana's curiosity as a child is denied, she will fulfil it later through prostituting herself. Rather than taking a sympathetic view of her behaviour, Zola supports a system which neglected the working class. Since Nana originates from a working-class family, creating her role as a prostitute in *Nana* is pre-conditioned since her *filthy* and *destructive* nature is pre-determined in *L'Assommoir*. In his article about the Zolian child, Jeremy Worth sees it as a depraved little adult who bears the signs of the defects of his adult world. In observing Nana both in *L'Assommoir* and in *Nana*, Worth argues that:

[C]hez Zola, (nous avons déjà vu l'exemple de Nana dans *L'Assommoir*), c'est très souvent un enfant qui sert de fenêtre naturaliste, enfant qui voit, et qui est vu lui-même [...] dans sa nudité sévère et dont les facultés d'observation et d'imitation le vouent aussi à une existence animale, agent lui-même de corruption et de contamination'.⁶⁸

Arguably, for Zola, Nana does not serve as a window for the naturalist theory; Nana is different from other Zolian children such as Marie, Eulalie, Jeanne, Miette, Catherine, Pauline, Silvère and others. It is particularly due to Nana's loss of innocence, inherited from her exposure to

⁶⁸Jeremy Worth, 'Le Grotesque et le néant: l'enfant-adulte et l'adulte-enfant dans *L'Assommoir* et *Nana*' *Excavatio*, 25 (2001), 3-4.

depravity in *L'Assommoir* that Zola attacks her because he sees in Nana an agent of corruption ready to poison the bourgeoisie since she was born in the insalubrious backstreets of Paris. For Zola, young Nana was *meant* to be a dangerous and vicious femme fatale because her characteristics will be used later in *Nana* to continue the Rougon-Macquart female line's propensity to sexual promiscuity and hence to madness.

2.3 Nana's Body as her Trading Commodity

Zola's view of Nana as a perverted child in *L'Assommoir* is replaced in *Nana*. Nana's behaviour, as a result of forces that were beyond her control, re-appears to haunt her in her womanhood. Nana displaces her unfulfilled maternal bond with sex in order to replace that loss. For Nana the act of copulation becomes a game since it was pre-ordained by her childhood, having witnessed her mother and Lantier's love-making: seeing this act was a game for Nana and she replaces this game with Muffat, Steiner, and Chouard respectively, who unconsciously represent father figures for her; she uses Georges Hugon and later Satin as both son and mother to satisfy her unfulfilled infantile needs. (Nana has a short lesbian relationship with Satin; this relationship for Zola is taboo, yet he insists upon representing it. This reinforces his attitude towards the topic of female sexuality which for him is arguably synonymous with death). Owing to her lack of maternal nurture Nana's sadistic impulses are developed. This is reflected when she cruelly reveals to Muffat his wife's relationship with Fauchery: '[Nana] le secouait pour lui arracher cette confession [...]. "Non, c'est impayable [...] Mais, mon pauvre chien, tu as dû être d'une bête"' (*Nana*, p. 1273). In this scene, Nana unconsciously transfers her grudge against her parents to Muffat by destroying the fictitious marital peace that exists between the count and countess. Nana's pleasure in destroying happiness reflects the need to protect the self and to receive gratification, as highlighted when Muffat returns to Nana, having left her for a while out of 'Christian' remorse for his wife. Parenthetically, by revealing Sabine Muffat's actions, Nana also highlights the hypocrisy of the aristocracy, who hide behind

a veneer of moral values and social rank. Furthermore, Nana 'contaminating' the bourgeoisie is also reflected in the passage when Georges Hugon attempts to commit suicide after realizing that she will never marry him and is instead sleeping with his brother Philippe. Nana's 'revenge' is mirrored in this passage: the ways in which she treats Georges reflect a wish to alleviate her own neglect by her mother, but also to gratify her own sublimation at seeing Georges hurt (*Nana*, pp. 1440-44). When Georges tries to kill himself, Nana is indignant but not sad: she is not able to feel such pain since she has been conditioned in her childhood to react unemotionally to mental and physical blows.

Nana's argument with Georges evokes a scene of children arguing during a game, wherein she plays the mother and Georges the son. When Madame Hugon (Georges's real mother) enters the room and is presented with the scene, Nana unconsciously reverts to a childhood state by acting like a child who feels guilty, but denies her actions: 'Madame, ce n'est pas moi, je vous jure Il voulait m'épouser, j'ai dit non, il s'est tué' (*Nana*, p. 1445). Nana's childlike behaviour is also perceived when she stays at La Mignotte, the house in the countryside provided for her by her lover Steiner. In this chapter, Nana re-enacts her childhood in repeated games of mother/child relationships with Georges Hugon. Although this chapter highlights sexual intrigues, it is nevertheless sad. In this scene, Nana revisits her childhood and momentarily gains a pleasurable feeling from her stay. This is illustrated in the ways she responds to the house's idyllic setting: Nana's childlike nature and immaturity emerge when she expresses to her maid, Zoé, her happiness whilst exploring the area: 'Zoé! Zoé! où es-tu? monte donc! ... Oh! tu n'as-pas idée... C'est féérique!' (p. 1234). Nana's childlike behaviour is described by the narrator as:

Son besoin était de suivre toute les allées, de prendre une possession immédiate de ces choses, dont elle avait rêvé autrefois, quand elle traînait ses savates d'ouvrière sur le pavé de Paris. [...] Tout à coup, dans le crépuscule, elle distingua des fraises. Alors, son enfance éclata. (*Nana*, p. 1235)

Nana's return to childhood innocence is further illustrated when Georges Hugon appears in this episode and she takes on the roles of both mother and child: on the one hand she re-enacts a childhood memory by playing with Georges as if he were her little doll: 'Nana s'était mise à boutonner le peignoir [...] Elle le tournait comme une poupée, donnait des tapes, faisait bouffer la jupe par-derrière' (p. 1237); on the other hand, she submits herself to an incestuous act, in so far as she views herself as Georges's mother, when the latter wants to sleep with her. Nana's 'maternal' feelings towards Georges are also reflected when, after having enjoyed seeing Nana as the naked Venus at the theatre, all male characters rush to her apartment in order to make themselves known to her in the hope of sleeping with her. Georges, who is seventeen at this time, is also eager to give away his virginity, to Nana's complete astonishment: 'Alors, les enfants aussi? Maintenant, les hommes lui arrivaient en maillot? Elle s'abandonna, familière, maternelle, se tapant sur les cuisses et demandant par rigolade: "Tu veux donc qu'on te mouche bébé?"' (p. 1141).⁶⁹ Nana again assumes the maternal role at La Mignotte, when Georges stays with her in her bedroom in order to hide from the other prospective lovers who are roaming around her. "'Non, laisse-moi [...]. Ce serait très vilain, à ton âge Écoute, je resterai ta maman'". Et Nana s'attendrissait [...]. D'une main hésitante, elle le repoussait' (p. 1239). The connection between Nana's 'mature actions', as Georges's imagined mother, to those of her childhood is further emphasized by the happiness that she finds with Georges during her stay at La Mignotte. In this house, Nana rediscovers her youth, or 'ses quinze ans' as Zola remarks, because she is able to connect with the adolescent seventeen year old Georges. This suggests that Nana has not reached maturity, as is illustrated when Nana breaks valuable objects given to her by her other lover, Philippe Hugon. Nana's immaturity concerning valuable objects is equal to that of a child, as soon as she is caught by Philippe who gave her the present, as exemplified when she mimics the voice of a toddler: 'Et tout à coup, [...], le couvercle tomba et se brisa. Elle demeurait stupéfaite, les yeux sur les

⁶⁹ In the Pléiade edition, the text reads 'au maillot' rather than 'en maillot'. We do not know if this was a mistake on Zola's part. For the sake of clarity I have corrected it to 'en'.

morceaux, disant : “Oh! Il est cassé!” Puis elle se mit à rire [...], elle zézaya d’une voix de gamine: “Fini! n’a plus! n’a plus !” (pp. 1435-36). This behaviour originates as well in the unfulfilled pleasures of childhood which her mother denied her, as seen in *L’Assommoir* when Nana, having stuffed herself with chocolates, feels sick: “Oh! Maman, j’ai bobo... Oh! Maman, j’ai bobo...” (p. 593), and her mother’s response is to slap her: “Tiens! crève!” lui disait sa mère. “Tu me ficheras la paix, peut-être!” (*L’Assommoir*, p. 582). All the emotional and physical abuses that Nana received from her parents during her childhood have brought her to destroy and to disrespect others: she is therefore unable to comprehend the value of love or of objects.

Nana’s sadistic desires derive from witnessing her mother having sex with Lantier; she nevertheless exhibits in her womanhood certain inhibitions which originate from a repressed past: although Nana bonded with her mother, the length of that period was limited. The first trauma which affected Nana is represented in the way her birth was delivered in *L’Assommoir*. In this scene, the narrator shows Gervaise to be uninterested in the arrival of her baby. Since Zola in this novel deals with working-class characters, amongst whom a lack of contraception and knowledge led to a higher birth rate, it is arguably true that in that period a child, especially if that child was one too many, was not given much attention.⁷⁰ Zola does highlight the routine nature of birth by making the contractions and delivery scene mechanical and showing Gervaise to be more concerned over Coupeau’s dinner than worrying about her baby’s arrival. Indeed, Nana’s imminent birth:

[N]’allait pas l’empêcher [Gervaise] en rentrant de préparer le dîner de Coupeau; ensuite elle verrait à se jeter un instant sur le lit, [...]. Elle faisait, ce soir- là, un ragoût de mouton [...]. Tout marcha encore bien, [...]. Elle tourna son roux, en piétinant devant le fourneau, aveuglée par de grosses larmes. Si elle accouchait n’est ce pas? Ce n’était point une raison pour laisser Coupeau sans manger. (*L’Assommoir*, p. 467)⁷¹

⁷⁰ See Van der Beken, *Zola: le dessous des femmes*, p. 12. See also, Silvia Schafer, *Children in Moral Danger And the Problem of Government in Third Republic France*.

⁷¹ For delivery scenes in Zola’s novels, see Kaminskas, ‘Fonction réaliste et fonction symbolique’. Although Kaminskas analyses the ways in which delivery scenes are symbolically represented in *La Terre*, *La Joie de vivre* and *Pot-Bouille*, unfortunately she does not refer to Gervaise’s delivery in *L’Assommoir*, may be because Zola gives no more than a few lines in describing the scene.

The tone in which the scene is narrated also suggests an indirect condemnation of Gervaise's indifferent, distracted attitude towards the imminent birth of her child since her husband's comfort comes first. Gervaise's indifference towards her child is furthermore replicated and emphasized when Coupeau comes in and finds the newborn at her mother's feet: 'Quand il rentra à sept heures, il la trouva couchée, bien enveloppée, très pâle sur l'oreiller. L'enfant pleurait, emmailloté dans un châle, aux pieds de la mère' (p. 468).

Although Nana as a newborn was breast-fed, Gervaise did not bond with her child, given Nana's placement at the foot of the bed and not in her mother's arms. Although the child could not have understood, she still sensed her mother's lack of feeling: the lack of primary nurturing becomes thus the origin of Nana's scepticism about giving and receiving love. This is highlighted when she sleeps with Muffat and believes that: 'C'était trop bête d'aimer, ça ne menait à rien' (*Nana*, p. 1258). Nana refuses to be loved and to love as result of the ways in which she was brought up.

2.4 Nana's Relationship with Love and Death.

In order to 're-establish a state of things and in order to preserve itself', Nana's ego protects itself through two instincts: the destructive instinct and the desire for pleasure.⁷² By fusing these two, Nana destroys, but also gratifies, what was denied to her — love — even if this is egocentric. Yet, Nana cannot feel love apart from imagining she is in love with Fontan. This short, but stormy relationship with Fontan highlights a need to return to the deprived and disadvantaged environment in which she lived; indeed, Nana's primary pleasure is to hurt sadistically others around her since she was a victim of child abuse. Nana's other instinct is the death instinct; it begins whilst witnessing her father's fall when distracted by her call: 'Nana, amusée tout à coup par la vue de son père, tapait de ses petites mains [...]. "Papa! papa!"

⁷² Freud, *The Ego and the Id: The Two Classes of Instincts*, pp. 37-38.

criait-elle de toute sa force; “papa! Regarde donc!” (*L’Assommoir*, p. 482). Nana’s death instinct is not just associated with a lack of bonding with her mother: it is also strongly connected to her father. The destructive powers that she uses to destroy others in *Nana* also derive from feeling guilty over her father’s accident which occurred on her third birthday in *L’Assommoir*: Nana is perceived by her parents to be responsible for her father’s fall, and hence responsible for their future misfortune and depravity. Indeed, Nana’s relationship with her father sours as soon as she goes through puberty: as well as not being nurtured by her mother, Nana does not fulfil her relationship with her father. Conversely, her pubescent sexuality is encouraged ironically by her father to become promiscuous. Indeed, Nana’s description as ‘ferment de destruction’ begins from the time of her birth when her father, Coupeau, names her ‘Mademoiselle Souillon... Vous avez une petite frimousse bien noire. Ça blanchira, n’ayez pas peur. Il faudra être sage, ne pas faire la gourgandine, grandir raisonnable, comme papa et maman’ (*L’Assommoir*, p. 468). Nana, born a girl, becomes principally a disappointment to her mother as well as to her father; she is at once stigmatized by her father, as a future ‘souillon’ and ‘gourgandine’ with a ‘frimousse bien noire’. This eventually influences her behaviour with men: the filth which her father attributes to her pre-empts Nana’s future acts, even though she does not understand it at this stage; by having words like ‘souillon’ and ‘gourgandine’ and phrases such as ‘frimousse noire’ drummed into her when young, Nana believes in her adulthood that she is naturally as her father described her.

For Zola, Nana’s interest in sex originates also in the ways in which she was sexually manhandled at birth by her aunt, Madame Lerat, who, in her wish to establish her gender, turns her over to view her sex:

Madame Lerat examinait la petite partout, la déclarait bien conformée, ajoutait même, avec intention, que ça ferait une fameuse femme [...], elle la pétrissait légèrement, malgré ses cris, afin de l’arrondir. Mme Lorilleux lui arracha le bébé en se fâchant: ça suffisait pour donner tous les vices à une créature, de la tripoter ainsi. (*L’Assommoir*, p. 469)

In this scene we can see that Nana has already been 'conditioned' by Zola to become a 'fameuse femme' and a 'gourgandine' in *Nana*, since his narrator suggests the word 'vices' and the verb 'tripoter' in Madame Lorilleux's comments, thus preparing Nana's future career as a prostitute. Zola is pre-empting her closeness to promiscuity because she is born a female and belongs to the working-class. This reinforces his incorrect experimental diagnosis of women as characters in his fiction, yet emphasizes his hidden desires with regard to the female genitalia.

Nana's sadistic behaviour is also the result of her father's treatment at her first communion. Nana's purity, or childhood innocence, is symbolically tainted by her father's verbal rape: Coupeau has become disabled by his fall; in actual fact, Coupeau has become sexually impotent through alcohol abuse and as a result Gervaise returns to her previous life of drunkenness and to her ex-boyfriend Lantier with a subsequent tragic outcome (Gervaise's eventual bankruptcy and death). Arguably, Coupeau's fall is symbolic of his castration since his drinking excesses inhibit his sexual capabilities. Nevertheless, Coupeau's repressed resentment towards Nana is depicted in this scene. This is characterized by his aggressiveness towards her while unleashing sadistic sexual impulses on her, symbolically tainting by his uncouth verbosity the whiteness of the communion dress, or Nana's purity as a child:

Mais le zingueur était joliment taquin, les soirs de ribote. Il lui parlait dans le cou. "Je t'en ficheraï, des robes blanches! Hein? [C]'est encore pour te faire des nichons dans ton corsage avec des boules de papier, comme l'autre dimanche?... Oui, oui, attends un peu! Je te vois bien tortiller ton derrière. Ça te chatouille, les belles frusques. Ça te monte le coco... Veux-tu décaniller de là, bougre de chenillon! Retire tes patoches, colle-moi ça dans un tiroir, ou je te débarbouille avec!" (*L'Assommoir*, pp. 678-79)

The physical and verbal abuse of Nana is also carried out by Gervaise: 'Chaque soir, Nana recevait sa raclée. Quand le père était las de la battre, la mère lui envoyé des torgnolles pour lui apprendre à bien se conduire' (*L'Assommoir*, p. 726). Nana reacts to her traumatic upbringing and in retaliation she destroys others in order to pacify her angst. Yet, Nana in *Nana* has an ambivalent reaction towards the ways she was treated as a child: she experiences them as both frightening and pleasurable. This is reflected when she argues with Muffat with

regard to the money that he gives her: 'J'en ai assez d'être chic! Si j'en crève c'est mon plaisir' (*Nana*, p. 1285). Nana is repeating her mother's invectives when she hits her: 'Tiens — crève!' Yet, Nana does not want to die and is frightened at the thought of it: 'j'ai peur de mourir [...] J'ai peur de mourir [...]' (*Nana*, p. 1410). In the scenes analysed above Zola is arguably depicting what he believes are the 'makings' of a depraved working-class family.⁷³

2.5 The Narrator's Role in *La Curée* and in *Nana*

Freud remarks that fantasies are unconscious sublimations originating in a repressed past which are channelled towards creativity.⁷⁴ Freud's theory functions well in Zola's language since the description of Renée's and Nana's bodies reinforces the narrator's libidinal sublimation which are, in turn, stimulated by the sight and smell that women's bodies impart in the passages that are examined. Male protagonists also hold fetishes of the female sexual organ because it is held as their object of desire; this is reflected at the beginning of the novel when Nana is expected to enter the stage and sing. The narrator tells us that most of Paris is present at the scene, and the majority of the viewing audience is male: 'Des messieurs, comme accrochés au passage, [...] lisaient; d'autres, debout causaient, barrant les portes' (*Nana*, p. 1097). In this scene, the men constitute an 'active presence and apparently need no introduction', as Romana Lowe observes.⁷⁵ Lowe rightly argues that Zola gives the men the power to speak, whilst 'the women [...] are discussed only within the male speech' (p. 90). Indeed, male superiority and female inferiority are put in place at the opening of the novel, and through the action of presenting and viewing Nana's body the narrator establishes a process of counter-transference between the male protagonists and himself. Indeed, the narrator is also present in this scene as reflected through the sound of his voice which reports the scene to the reader. In anticipating Nana's entrance with eagerness both narrator and

⁷³The argument about Zola and the working-class merits deeper analysis and discussion, but unfortunately would be a digression from the current thesis.

⁷⁴ Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, p. 33.

⁷⁵ Lowe, *The Fictional Female*.

male characters express erotic desires. Indeed, Nana and Renée are male creations and function as ‘construct[s] of male fantasy’, as Brian Nelson also remarks.⁷⁶

With regard to sexual fantasy in language, Georges Bataille shows that there is an association between language and sexuality. For Bataille ‘un langage littéraire est la perversion du langage un peu plus même que l’erotisme n’est celle des fonctions sexuelles’.⁷⁷ Zola’s language in these novels is sadomasochistic: through his fantasy world the narrator’s perverse and fetishist desires emerge in the language as ‘des désirs cachés de la vie obscure’, as Bataille observes.⁷⁸ Indeed, for Zola, Nana’s body helps the narrator’s imagination and that of his male characters to have access to ‘l’inconnu du désir’, as shown by the anticipated excitement that they later project whilst waiting for Nana to enter the stage (*Nana*, p. 1118). With the help of his male characters’ erotic desires, Nana’s body provides ecstasy as well to the narrator and allows him to fantasize. Indeed, the reader ‘reads’ Nana through the men’s perspectives since she represents for them the ultimate embodiment of male desire. This short analysis of male sexual fantasy reinforces thus the need to examine simultaneously Zola’s sexual frustrations and desires in relation to female sexuality.

Zola told Ulbach that he was interested in ‘les ragouts bien épicés’ when referring to this mode of writing and to the representation of sexuality. He also liked to ‘gratter son public au bon endroit’ as Nana does (*Nana*, p. 1108). There was a trend to provide sensation whilst creating episodes and connecting them to sex, crime, mystery, rape, and madness. Nineteenth-century novelists enjoyed shocking their public by exploiting what was sensational in literature. The effect was to startle, thrill, impress, and excite or please the readers’ imagination. As one example, Octave Mirbeau’s *Le Jardin des supplices* (1899) is a disconcerting narrative of black humour which caricaturizes Third Republic politicians, but also

⁷⁶ Nelson, ‘Nana: Uses of the Female Body’, p. 407.

⁷⁷ Quoted by Nathalie Kok, *Confession et perversion: une exploration psychanalytique du discours pervers dans la littérature française moderne* (Louvain: Peeters, 2000), p. 1.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

impresses upon a reading public the distinction between the true notions of good and evil.⁷⁹ The nineteenth century response to the sexually objectified female body did not stop the readers from being curious, fascinated, or even repulsed at such representation. Indeed, nineteenth-century realist and naturalist novelists took advantage of their ‘succès de scandale’ and used it as a means to emphasize their aggressive approaches to the issues of class, gender, race, and imperialism, as did Mirbeau with his *Jardin des supplices*. Victorian sensation fiction was also a trend in English novelists of the period, when this mode of writing was seen as all the literary rage.⁸⁰ For example, Charles Dickens, Wilkie Collins, and Elizabeth Braddon depicted themes of bigamy, illegitimacy, adultery, murder, and inheritance scandals which captivated their Victorian readers.⁸¹ Critics of such a genre, including Henry Mansel, attacked sensation fiction as ‘violently opposed to our moral senses’ and likened it to ‘a virus that was spreading in all directions’.⁸² Mansel further remarked that ‘[t]here is something unspeakably disgusting in this ravenous appetite for carrion, this vulture-like instinct which smells out the newest mass of social corruption, and hurries to devour the loathsome dainty before the scent has evaporated’ (p. 502). In addition, for Tzvetan Todorov, ‘the fantastic [or the sensational] is defined as a moment of hesitation between belief and disbelief’.⁸³ For him, ‘the fantastic occupies the duration of that uncertainty’ (p. 25). Zola took advantage of such literary representations in order to shock his public, as did Mirbeau and Baudelaire. Whilst considering this important factor which permeated the literary climate in nineteenth-century

⁷⁹ Octave Mirbeau, *Le Jardin des supplices* (Paris: Charpentier-Fasquelle, 1899). See also Robert Zeigler, ‘Utopie et Perversion dans *Le Jardin des supplices*’, *Cahiers Octave Mirbeau*, 11 (2004), 91-114.

⁸⁰ Kimberley Harrison and Richard Fantina (eds.), *Victorian Sensations: Essays on a Scandalous Genre*, (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2006). See also, Winifred Hughes, *The Maniac in the Cellar: Sensation Novels of the 1860s* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980).

⁸¹ See Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist* and *Great Expectations*; Wilkie Collins, *The Moonstone*, and *The Lady in White*; Elizabeth Braddon, *Lady Audley’s Secret*.

⁸² Henry L. Mansel, ‘Sensation Novels’, *Quarterly Review* 113 (April 1863), 502. See also Ellen Casey, ‘Other people’s Prudery: Mary Elizabeth Braddon’, in *Sexuality and Victorian Literature*, ed. by Don Richard Cox (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1984), pp. 72-82.

⁸³ Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1975).

French and English literature, this study focuses on the repressed in connection with Zola's fictional texts, as explained in Chapter One.

Zola employs the glance of the observer-voyeur as a linguistic device to gratify through the narrator's gaze his libido; through this he creates 'an invisible wall which reinforces the visible one', as Naomi Schor explains.⁸⁴ Schor rightly points out that Zola controls his heroines through 'sight' and remarks that his female characters are trapped in a claustrophobic universe, where their freedom is restricted 'by the omnipresent gazes of [...] the voyeuristic observer'. Nana and Renée are examples of female specimens whom the novelist both confines and observes. In fact, by confining his female characters to small spaces (Renée's bedroom at the hotel Béraud, the carriage in which she travels, her bathroom where she bathes, and the conservatory in which she plans her next love-making with Maxime, as well as Nana's different properties and bedrooms where sex takes place), Zola is able to diagnose them through observation, or more accurately, voyeurism. I examine below three passages, two from *Nana* and one from *La Curée*, to show how the erotic gaze functions in these novels. In the first passage the narrator is presenting his readers with the naked body of Nana at the beginning of the novel:

Un frisson remua la salle. Nana était nue. Elle était nue avec une tranquille audace, certaine de toute la puissance de sa chair. Une simple gaze l'enveloppait; ses épaules rondes, sa gorge d'amazone dont les pointes roses se tenaient levées et rigides comme des lances, ses larges hanches qui roulaient dans un balancement voluptueux, ses cuisses de blonde grasse, tout son corps se devinait, se voyait sous le tissu léger, d'une blancheur d'écume. C'était Vénus naissant des flots, n'ayant pour voile que ses cheveux. [...] Tout d'un coup, de la bonne enfant, la femme se dressait, inquiétante, apportant le coup de folie de son sexe, ouvrant l'inconnu du désir. Nana souriait toujours, mais d'un sourire aigu de mangeuse d'hommes. (*Nana*, p. 1118)

In the following passage, Nana is viewing herself admiringly:

Un des plaisirs de Nana était de se déshabiller en face de son armoire à glace, où elle se voyait en pied. Elle faisait tomber jusqu'à sa chemise; puis, toute nue, elle s'oubliait, elle se regardait longuement. C'était une passion de son corps, un ravissement du satin de sa peau et de la ligne souple de sa taille, qui la tenait sérieuse, attentive, absorbée dans un amour d'elle-même. Souvent, le coiffeur la trouvait ainsi, sans

⁸⁴ Naomi Schor, 'Introduction', *Yale French Studies*, 42 (1969), 7.

qu'elle tournât la tête. Alors, Muffat se fâchait, et elle restait surprise. Que lui prenait-il ? Ce n'était pas pour les autres, c'était pour elle. (*Nana*, p. 1269)

In *La Curée*, once again the narrator gazes at Renée in her bathroom:

Mais le cabinet avait un coin délicieux. [...] Chaque matin, Renée prenait un bain de quelques minutes. Ce bain emplissait pour la journée le cabinet d'une moiteur, d'une odeur de chair fraîche et mouillée. Parfois, un flacon débouché, un savon resté hors de sa boîte, mettaient une pointe plus violente dans cette langueur un peu fade. La jeune femme aimait à rester là, jusqu'à midi, presque nue. Cette baignoire rose, [...] cette mousseline du plafond et des murs, [...] prenaient des rondeurs de chair, des rondeurs d'épaules et de seins. [...] Quand Renée sortait du bain, son corps blond n'ajoutait qu'un peu de rose à toute cette chair rose de la pièce. (*La Curée*, pp. 479-80)

The narrator's voice functions in these passages as a voyeuristic device since the presence of women's bodies attracts him and contributes to the narrative's 'most powerful [visual] motor', as Peter Brooks remarks.⁸⁵ The narrator's repressed sexuality is arguably perverted. This is mirrored in the erotic gaze and the olfactory sense that permeates certain passages of *La Curée* and *Nana*. In the first two passages where Nana is at the theatre performing, and when she is viewing herself in the mirror, voyeurism is reflected when the narrator stops at every part of Nana's body to 'inspect' it. Arguably it is not only the men in the audience or Muffat who are viewing Nana, it is also the narrator. Along with the male characters and their aroused sexual interest in Nana, he also expresses such desires; the narrator concentrates on describing Nana's body through the thin and transparent gauze that covers her body, this very fine item of clothing contributes to a sense of excitement in the narrator's and his male characters' sexual fantasies because it helps conceal as well as reveal Nana's nudity. The following words describe his voyeuristic interest: 'épaules rondes', 'pointes roses' (employed in the narrative as a euphemism for Renée's nipples), 'hanches voluptueuses', 'cuisses', 'ligne souple', and her 'satin de peau'. In the second passage, the narrator is complicit with Muffat and both are furthermore mesmerised by Nana's body. However, in this scene, it is not Muffat who is angry at Nana's constant looking in the mirror, it is the narrator who is cross with Muffat since Muffat has intruded into his thoughts by talking to Nana about Fauchery's article:

⁸⁵ Peter Brooks, *Body Work: Objects of Desire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 5.

'Tu n'as pas lu l'article du Figaro?' (p. 1269) and by this interruption has disturbed the narrator's staring at Nana. This is depicted when Nana believes her body is hers to view with the complicity of the narrator's gaze: the interaction of erotic games that is going on between narrator and protagonist in this passage is cut short by Muffat's sudden intrusion.

Furthermore, in the passage where Renée is taking a bath, the narrator is viewing her body and is enjoying every aspect of it. In describing her bathroom, the narrator enjoys further Renée's body because he is alone with his character as we only hear his voice in this passage (see Section 2.8 for further detail).

Zola limits his female characters' spaces in order to gaze at them and to control their actions. Henri Mitterand also believes that for the novelist, 'il n'y a pas d'espace en soi dans l'œuvre de Zola, mais seulement un espace pour soi'.⁸⁶ In other words, Zola is using the naturalist form of empirical observation in order to satisfy his own sexual curiosity with regard to women's bodies; indeed, his voyeurism is veiled behind the naturalist method of observation which he claims to utilize.

Micheline Van der Beken also demonstrates that Zola 'limite [...] l'espace de ses personnages, mais les espaces les plus limités sont généralement assignés aux femmes'.⁸⁷ Jennifer Davy also argues that 'spaces in *Nana* are inherently claustrophobic. Wide-open space is always located outside the existing space of a scene [...] and represents a fantasy'.⁸⁸ Davy quotes Naomi Schor who also believes that 'Zola's [female] characters are trapped in a claustrophobic universe, not just by windows, walls and labyrinths, but most of all by the omnipresent gaze of a multitude of voyeuristic observers'.⁸⁹ Renée's role has a dual function for the narrator: on the one hand, her body is inspected and fantasized about, then contained and on the other hand, she is demeaned. Moreover, by 'partaking' in erotic games with his

⁸⁶ Henri Mitterand, 'Pour une poétique de l'espace romanesque: l'exemple de Zola', in *Zola and the Craft of Fiction: Essays in Honour of W. F. Hemmings*, ed. by Robert Lethbridge and Terry Keefe (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1990), p. 82.

⁸⁷ Van der Beken, *Zola: le dessous des femmes*, p. 27.

⁸⁸ Jennifer Davy, 'The Poem of Male Desires', *Excavatio*, 20 (2005), 27.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

female protagonists, the narrator unconsciously replenishes the unfulfilled relationship with the absent mother. This is mainly represented in the scene where Muffat reminisces over his youth, as well as in the one when he begs Nana to return to him:

Le comte Muffat n'avait pas encore ouvert les lèvres. Il songeait invinciblement à sa jeunesse. Sa chambre d'enfant était toute froide. Plus-tard, à seize ans, lorsqu'il embrassait sa mère, chaque soir, il emportait jusque dans son sommeil la glace de ce baiser. Un jour, en passant il avait aperçu, par une porte entrebâillée, une servante qui se débarbouillait; et c'était l'unique souvenir qui l'eût troublé, de la puberté à son mariage. Puis, il avait trouvé chez sa femme une stricte obéissance aux devoirs conjugaux; [...] Et, brusquement, on le jetait dans cette loge d'actrice, devant cette fille nue. Lui qui n'avait jamais vu la comtesse Muffat mettre ses jarretières, il assistait aux détails intimes d'une toilette de femme, [...] au milieu de cette odeur si forte et si douce. (*Nana*, p. 1213)

Seemingly, Muffat did not fulfil his libidinal impulses when he was a child. The phrase 'puberté goulue d'adolescent' adds emphasis to his unfulfilled infantile libido. Muffat needs to re-experience this before reaching the 'adolescent' stage: when Muffat visits Nana in the Théâtre des Variétés with the Prince of Wales, he (Muffat) experiences 'une odeur si forte et si douce'. Admittedly, this scene is suggestive and Zola is trying to excite his readers' libidinal impulses I would suggest. Nonetheless, like Muffat, the narrator is also present in the corridors of the theatre; in this passage, the narrator intrudes into his characters' thoughts in reflecting their feelings; and, like his male character, Muffat, he figuratively breathes the same 'haleines [qui] avaient chauffées l'air d'une odeur humaine' with the aid of 'l'oeil du rideau' (p. 1206), and also like Muffat, he receives sexual gratification through the sight and smell that the imagined body of Nana conveys. The passage below illustrates how this functions:

[C]e qui l'incommodait surtout, c'était l'étouffement de l'air, épaissi, surchauffé, où traînait une odeur forte, cette odeur de coulisses, puant [...] les dessous douteux des figurantes. Dans le couloir, la suffocation augmentait encore; des aigreurs d'eaux de toilettes. [...] Il y avait, [...] un vacarme des portes dont les continuels battements lâchaient des senteurs de femme [...] Alors, le comte Muffat, le sang aux joues, examina la loge [...]. Un moment, craignant de défaillir dans cette odeur de femme qu'il retrouvait, chauffée, décuplée, [...] il s'assit au bord du divan capitonné, entre les deux fenêtres. (*Nana*, pp. 1206-08)

Equally, the present participle 'puant' and the nouns 'dessous', and 'aigreurs' indicate disgust and strengthen the feeling of repugnance related to the filthy atmosphere that this place conveys; these words also underline the connection that Zola makes in this novel between sewers and prostitution, highlighting by his aversion and the sexual power of prostitutes to entrap men. Although Zola is reinforcing this connection, his narrator is nonetheless also attracted by the smell and enjoys as well sexual titillation fed by his female protagonist's imagined or created vision and smell. He exploits this feeling through Muffat's aroused libido whilst spying on Nana in her dressing-room. Indeed, the representation of women's body parts (in this case, the female sexual organ is implied) and women's smell act as fetishist objects for the narrator and for Muffat: the latter functions as the embodiment of masculine perversion, providing the narrator with more exciting ways of seeing and smelling his female characters' sex. Muffat's voyeuristic and olfactory senses enhance those of the narrator in that both subjects — the hidden narrator and the active Muffat — enjoy the views and the smell of women that the wings of the Théâtre des Variétés provide. Although Zola is ambivalent about female sexuality, as depicted in his sadistic attacks on them and in his attraction to their sex, his desires belong to the fantasy of the unconscious as well as to the need to shock his readers in the novel's sensational genre, as already shown. Through this technique, his readers would have been disgusted and/or attracted by such representation of female sexuality. Admittedly, we are dealing with fantasy here. Indeed, writing has a beneficial effect on the narrator's sexual health: Mitterand finds this to be 'salutaire' since it arguably functions as a release from sexual frustrations. Mitterand also informs the reader that he believes Zola would have felt a 'frémissement de la plume' which would have become 'bien raide en effet' whilst imagining and creating Nana and Renée.⁹⁰ Since the writing of these novels represents for the narrator a

⁹⁰ Mitterand, *Zola*, II, 208.

‘poème du désir du male’, the narrator also becomes the willing victim of Nana’s and Renée’s sexual dominance.⁹¹

2.6 The Mechanism of the Sexual Drive

In the connection she makes between writing and sexual fantasy, Suzanne Stewart argues that the narrator ‘cultivates his private obsessions with women’s genitalia by interiorizing his sexuality’.⁹² Arguably, Zola’s sexual issues are resolved through a sexual *jouissance* derived from the fetishes that the narrator indulges in, whilst describing (and gazing at) Nana and Renée. The writing of *Nana* and *La Curée* contains different types of fetishes to gratify the narrator’s sexual sublimations: indeed, it is through a descriptive plethora of private parts, smell, and women’s personal belongings that the narrator’s fetishist inclinations are reflected. This argument reinforces the one made about the female phantom which haunts Zola’s fiction, since female sexuality is repeatedly represented as sexual fantasy. As part of this sexual fantasy, the ‘jumelle’, or binoculars, which Fauchery uses to view Nana at the ‘Théâtre des Variétés’, symbolize the male sexual organ and belong to Zola’s fetishes: ‘Fauchery se decida à diriger sa jumelle vers l’avant scène’ (*Nana*, p. 1105). Fauchery is the narrator’s imagined substitute through whom he appropriates the optical instrument in order to view his female characters’ bodies. The binoculars function as a fetish and may be a substitute for sexual gratification and a replacement for the phallus. In other words, the instrument used as an object in the narrative discourse to view women exercises libidinal fantasies through its usage. It is through this visual fetish that the narrator is able to fulfil his own ‘curiosité inassouvie’ (*La Curée*, p. 325), albeit imaginatively, as Muffat does when aided by ‘l’oeil du rideau’, whilst viewing Nana dressing up for her scene in the wings.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 463.

⁹² Suzanne Stewart, *Sublime Surrender: Male Masochism in the Fin-de-Siècle* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), pp. 30-40.

The narrator's gaze through Muffat's eyes functions also as a fetish; indeed, it is Muffat's eyes that follow Nana in her dressing-room which help the narrator also to see 'Nana [...] ainsi, pliée et les hanches élargies, venir à reculons vers le trou par lequel il la regardait' (p. 1221), and as Muffat does, the narrator also, 'but dans une aspiration tout le sexe de la femme, qu'il ignorait encore et qui lui battait le visage' (*Nana*, p. 1223). The language's voyeuristic and olfactory elements belonging to the novelist's sexual fantasies are also examined by Gaëlle Bellalou who alludes to the scene in which Nana is undressing in her dressing-room:

Il semble aussi que Zola prenne plaisir à donner une vision détaillée de Nana dans sa loge. Nous assistons, dans cette scène, à un cas de voyeurisme extrême. Zola paraît être présent constamment dans les descriptions qu'il donne de la femme nue [...]. Et c'est là que le voyeurisme atteint son point le plus culminant [...]. Nous retrouvons une autre variante de cette scène d'intimité de la femme violée, à travers les yeux de Muffat.⁹³

Fetishist desire for the female genitalia is also illustrated when Muffat is waiting in Nana's dressing-room for her to arrive, and later begs Nana to return to him (*Nana*, p. 1331); the style in which this passage is narrated suggests Muffat's regression to the anal stage. Indeed, words like 'violent', 'volupté', 'ivresse', 'odeur', 'reconquérir', and phrases such as 'passion jalouse de cette femme', 'cuisson d'une blessure ancienne', 'un besoin d'elle seule, de ses cheveux', 'de sa bouche qui le hantait', 'un frisson courait ses membres', as well as 'il la désirait avec des exigences d'avares et d'infinies délicatesses', reinforce the oedipal desire to repossess the maternal and the sadistic need to feel and play with the maternal, as exemplified by Muffat's jealousy in keeping Nana's hair, mouth, clothes, and thighs to himself. This reinforces Muffat's regression into the anal or sadistic stage of infantile sexuality since he did not enjoy this important stage with his mother (see the reference made above, p. 190). Sylvie Collot also examines this topic in relation to Gervaise in *L'Assommoir* and argues that this issue belongs to Zola's imaginary and desirable world. Collot explains that Gervaise's avid desire for sweets acts as a replacement for sexual coitus and/or the need to re-enter the

⁹³ Gaëlle Bellalou, *Regards sur la femme dans l'œuvre d'Émile Zola: ses représentations du livre à l'écran* (Toulon: Presse du Monde, 2006), pp. 122-23.

maternal: 'Si le désir sexuel se traduit par une envie de sucrerie, le rêve de régression fait appel pour sa part à une autre catégorie d'aliments. [...] Dans la rêverie, sur cet aliment se manifeste le désir foncier qui préside à toute activité orale, celui de s'incorporer au corps maternel en une fusion ou une effusion bienheureuse'.⁹⁴

2.7 Sadomasochism as the Narrator's Auto-Erotic Game

In his classification of sadism and masochism, Gilles Deleuze defines the sadist as the 'instructor' and the masochist as the 'educator', one expressing an 'imperative' language and the other a 'descriptive' one, and distinguishes two factors which constitute this dual language. For Deleuze, 'the first, imperative, language represents the personal element; it directs and describes the personal violence of the sadist, as well as his individual taste. The second [...] represents the impersonal element and sadism. [In masochism], we are no longer in the presence of a torturer [...] We are dealing instead with a victim in search of a torturer and who needs to educate, persuade and collude an alliance with the torturer in order to realize the strangest of things'.⁹⁵ Zola fantasizes about an alliance with Nana and Renée (his torturers) in order to fulfil sadomasochistic pleasures because he both instructs (as dictated by the narrative discourse) and receives gratification through his female torturers.

In *Nana*, the imperative language is demonstrative; this is reflected when Nana directs her 'violence' towards Muffat: Nana is thus the sadistic torturer of both the narrator and Muffat since both use a form of descriptive language to enjoy the erotic game Nana plays, one to instruct, the other to undergo such an education. By submitting to violence, both Muffat and the narrator enjoy the torments that Nana inflicts on them and, in turn, highlight their masochistic tendencies since fetishism is one of the elements of masochism.⁹⁶ The correlation between the narrator's and the protagonist's masochistic desires is reinforced in Chapters

⁹⁴ Sylvie Collot, *Les lieux du plaisir: topologie amoureuse de Zola* (Paris: Hachette, 1992), pp. 71-72.

⁹⁵ Gilles Deleuze and Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, *Masochism: Coldness and Cruelty, and Venus in Furs*, trans. by Jean McNeil (New York: Zone Books, 1989), pp. 19-20.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

Nine and Thirteen and is represented in the same scene when Nana orders Muffat not to behave like a child: “Ah, ne fais pas l’enfant!” (*Nana*, p. 1334). This last command reinforces the masochistic and sadistic elements that exist in this scene, since later in the same passage the narrator makes allusion to Muffat’s figurative cut while he is kneeling before Nana. The sadistic element in this passage is reflected by the present participle ‘meurtrissant’ which enhances the pain which Muffat receives from his torturer, heightening his sexual pleasure; this is illustrated when Muffat insists on being trampled on by Nana:

Mais il le faisait déjà. Tombé à ses pieds, il l’avait prise par la taille, il la serrait étroitement, la face entre ses genoux, qu’il s’enfonçait dans la chair. Quand il la sentit ainsi, quand il la retrouva avec le velours de ses membres, sous l’étoffe mince de sa robe, une convulsion le secoua; et il grelottait la fièvre, éperdu, se meurtrissant davantage contre ses jambes, comme s’il avait voulu entrer en elle. (*Nana*, p. 1334)

The game which Muffat and Nana ‘play’ strengthens the sadomasochistic element which is associated with incest in this scene: in other words, Muffat enjoys masochistic games with Nana as the representation of his mother, and him as the repressed young pubescent who has found his youth re-awakened by Nana’s smell, clothes, and touch of her skin. Muffat’s masochism, as well as the narrator’s desire, is further revealed in Chapter Thirteen. In this passage Muffat’s dignity has reached its lowest ebb when Nana’s incessant affairs with men continue. Ironically, Muffat’s indignity becomes an ecstasy for him in this scene, since finding himself in Nana’s room, or rather in her genitalia, Muffat can disappear into it ‘en grelottant dans la toute puissance du sexe, comme s’il s’évanouissait devant l’inconnu du vaste ciel’ (p. 1459). The narrator’s view in comparing the female sexual organ to the wide heavens, where with infinite pleasure Muffat can lose himself, is paradoxical since he also represents it as a ‘dark continent’.⁹⁷ Again, the reader should also note the unconscious allusion to a wish to re-enter the maternal womb through the sexual act.

The narrator’s fantasy is in this scene projected through Nana’s sadistic games. This is further illustrated when it is implied that Muffat achieves an orgasm during the beating he

⁹⁷ Schor, ‘Smiles of the Sphinx’, p. 29.

both begs for and receives from Nana: ‘Et lui, aimait sa bassesse, goûtait la jouissance d’être une brute. Il aspirait encore à descendre, il criait: “Tape plus fort... Hou! hou! Je suis enragé, tape donc!”’ (p. 1461). There are two levels of sexual gratification taking place in this passage. The first is reflected through the sadistic and authoritarian games which Nana enjoys over Muffat: Nana uses the instructive language which she observes in her game, entering thus into an alliance with the narrator, since it is his voice which elicits the harsh words and actions in his female character. Ultimately, it is the narrator who also enters into an alliance with the victim by playing the game with his character, Muffat: the interaction between narrator and the character of Muffat is carried out through the ‘interchange’ of writing, achieving thus a *ménage à trois*. Deleuze refers to this type of interchange and observes that this ‘dialectic does not simply mean the free interchange of discourse, but implies a transposition or displacement of this kind, resulting in a scene being enacted simultaneously on several levels with reversal and reduplication in the allocation of roles and discourse’.⁹⁸ Since Nana is portrayed as the sadist, the narrator subconsciously changes roles with his male character and becomes simultaneously the victim and the torturer of a created chimera, the strong and powerful woman, the *Venus in Furs* of Leopold von Sacher-Masoch (*Venus im Pelz*, 1870).

Arguably, Nana represents Wanda, Sacher-Masoch’s cruel mistress in *Venus in Furs* since she also engages in masochistic games and becomes herself the victim of violence: this is represented in Chapter Seven of *Nana*, in her cohabitation with Fontan. Nana descends from her status as high-class prostitute to Muffat to the lowest level when she moves in with Fontan after going bankrupt. It is noticeable that when Nana goes through a crisis she either runs away from it (by moving house) or she destroys things and people around her in order to protect herself. Nana’s way of protecting herself is by becoming a victim and victimizing others: this suggests a need to return to her depraved origin.

⁹⁸ Deleuze, *Masochism*, p. 22.

2.8 The Nature of Fetishism and Masochism in *La Curée*.

La Curée also manifests signs of scopophilia — the deriving of sexual pleasure from viewing naked bodies and sexual acts.⁹⁹ There are three passages to be considered in this novel since their delineation directs the reader to the libidinal fantasies which the narrator experiences. The ‘lorgnette’ which is used in order to view Nana is also figuratively used in *La Curée*. Indeed, Renée uses the lorgnette at the beginning of the novel in order to view women. Zola gives her this object because he also compares her to a man; Renée is represented as being bisexual: ‘elle continuait à cligner des yeux avec sa mine de garçon impertinent’ (*La Curée*, p. 320). Given that these passages are too long to quote, I concentrate only on those sections that are directly relevant to this analysis.

The first one emphasizes the narrator’s fetishism of sight and smell. This is illustrated and reflected when Renée and Aristide Saccard give a dinner party at the beginning of the novel (p. 339). The narrator’s sexual fantasies, and his fetishist attraction to smell and sight, are further accentuated in the portrayal of the dining-table’s decorations. These fantasies are reflected in the imagery used in the description with attention to objects that have a euphemistic relationship with women. For example, the depiction of the dinner-table’s sumptuous display of silver mats, carved with fauns kidnapping nymphs in order to rape them, is an example of the narrator’s extensive imagination. Although Zola might have done some research on what kind of table decorations the upper-class had on their dinner table for this scene, the ways these objects are depicted might be said to have a euphemistic significance which is attributed to the sexual satisfaction of ‘femmes pamées’ since *pamée* has a sexual connotation, implying an orgasm, and would function as a fetish. In this passage, voyeurist and olfactory impulses emerge at once and aid the narrator to feed his unfulfilled sexuality or to gratify his libido; this is reflected, for example, in the imaginative smell that the ‘senteur âpre des écrevisses et l’odeur aigrette des citrons’ imparts, and in the feeling of ‘mousseline’,

⁹⁹ Brooks, *Body Work*, p. 24.

which the china plates would feel like if touched; this is furthermore depicted in the wine glasses' and decanter's delicate and slender forms, as well as in the delineation of the sparkling 'fontaines de feu'. Arguably, these objects symbolize for the narrator the delicate sides to women and their 'appetizing' body parts, as depicted by the smell, the touch, and the sight of these objects, thus contributing to the narrator's sexual raptures. This is an imaginative and lively tableau presented to the reader, but it strengthens the argument made for the narrator's ecstatic state and his fetishism in relation to women as shown by the attention to detail in every description.

The link between erotic language and sexual gratification is activated through the narrative's polarization of 'diegesis [and] mimesis', in other words through the telling and showing as demonstrated by Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan in her work on narrative fiction.¹⁰⁰ The telling and showing, in the above passage, is not perceived as free indirect speech since it does not function as it should: in other words, the reader does not encounter, specifically, a 'combined speech', or the 'co-presence of two voices', because the characters' 'pre-verbal perception of feelings' is not apparent since the level of narration is not directed at them at that moment; the focus is on telling and showing the description of objects which arouse a sexual stimulus.¹⁰¹ Nevertheless, the level of the narrative voice changes in the following passage; this is represented when Renée and Maxime are at the dress maker's. In this passage, the characters' pre-verbal perceptions of feelings function as free indirect discourse. This passage examines Renée's bisexuality in *La Curée* and her representation as an incestuous 'mother' to Maxime:

D'ailleurs, ces dames [Renée and her friends] encourageaient Maxime par leurs rires étouffés, [...] Elles lui laissaient toucher leur robe, frôler leurs épaules de ses doigts [...]; elles se le passaient de main en main, riant comme des folles, quand il leur baisait les poignets, du côté des veines, à cette place où la peau est si douce ; [...] C'était leur joujou, un petit homme d'un mécanisme ingénieux, qui embrassait, qui faisait la cour, qui avait les plus aimables vices du monde, mais qui restait un joujou, un petit homme

¹⁰⁰ Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction, Contemporary Poetics: Narration, Speech, Representation* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 7.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

de carton qu'on ne craignait pas trop, assez cependant pour avoir, sous sa main enfantine, *un frisson très doux*. (*La Curée*, pp. 408-09, my emphasis)

The oxymoron, as in the child who is capable of arousing at the same time 'un frisson très doux, [mais] qu'on ne craignait pas trop' in women, strengthens the incestuous and masochistic effect that this sentence conveys. This is further compounded by the women who shiver when Maxime 'plays' with them, providing them with pleasurable sensations. This enhances further the fetishist attraction associated with the mother; this image evokes that of an infant playing with objects that belong to his mother whilst suckling. Moreover, Maxime is attracted to Renée's costume, but mostly to her 'bottines d'homme dont les talons pointus s'enfonçaient dans le tapis, le ravissait' (*La Curée*, p. 404). As a fetishist instrument, the boots are signifiers of the phallus, as Valerie Steele has demonstrated in her study of clothes and accessories which for her function as fetishes.¹⁰² Indeed, since Renée is portrayed as bisexual, she is in effect the representative of both mother and father. This is reflected in the phallic nature of the boots and in the masochistic fantasy that Renée's costume provides to Maxime.

The passage where Renée is taking a bath in her *cabinet de toilette* heightens furthermore the narrator's fetishist and voyeuristic nature: this argument is valid since in this scene there are no male characters to intervene between Renée and the narrator. Once again, Renée's body is contained by the spatial structure of this passage, one into which the narrator's fetishistic and voyeuristic desires are manifest. All objects that surround Renée (the clothes that she wears, the paraphernalia that fills her bedroom and her bathroom) are fetishes to which the narrator submits himself to. Indeed, the description of Renée's closet presents the narrator with 'un nid de soie de dentelles', which provides 'une harmonie douce' in which the narrator imagines Renée undressing and washing. The phrase 'mettaient une pointe plus violente dans cette langueur un peu fade' might be read in psychoanalytic terms as the narrator experiencing an erection, as reflected by the nouns 'pointe' and 'langueur', and

¹⁰² Valerie Steele, *The Phallic Woman: Fetishism, Fashion, Sex and Power* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 14-32.

the adjectives 'violente' and 'moite'. This type of language is defined by Deleuze as 'pornology', in the sense that it is a 'non-language' which derives from fantasies in the unconscious.¹⁰³ As argued above, the narrator's sexual *jouissance* is achieved through the imagined vision of Renée washing. The visual representation of Renée coming out of her bath turns her into Aphrodite, the goddess of love emerging from the waves: this gives Renée an instant symbolic role as goddess of love, wherein every object of her surroundings is eroticized, phallic in shape, and so aids the narrator's sexual arousal; the 'gratte-dos, les polissoires, les limes de toutes les grandeurs, les ciseaux droits et recourbés' (p. 479), have in their shape a symbolic representation of the erect phallus. The 'imagined' movement of the eye panning the room, which helps describe and follow Renée, can be compared to that of the camera of Mark Lewis, the sexually psychotic character in Michael Powell's film *Peeping Tom* (1960), who simultaneously films and murders his female (prostitute) victims. I do not suggest that Zola had murderous ideas whilst creating Renée in this erotic space, yet this comparison seeks to show how he was at the same time an observer of his female characters whilst wishing to partake in their existence.

Furthermore, the erotic atmosphere that the description of this passage imparts entices the narrator to linger on it in order to visually inspect Renée's 'rondeurs de chair [...] d'épaules et de seins', to imaginatively taste the 'moiteur' of her 'odeur de chair fraîche et mouillée' (p. 480), and to smell the soap and perfume that she uses to wash and spray herself with.

The description of Renée's *cabinet de toilette* also belongs to the art of Sacher-Masoch where the art of suggestion is implicit within the description. Since Sacher-Masoch's novels belong to the fin-de-siècle era and *La Curée* was published in 1872, Zola's language is in this novel as descriptive, climactic, atmospheric, and suggestive in style as that of Sacher-Masoch, and contains all the necessary elements of the novels of Sacher-Masoch. Indeed, the examples

¹⁰³ Deleuze, *Masochism*, p. 22.

given above in the relationship between Muffat and Nana illustrate the link between the styles of Zola and Sacher-Masoch: this link is found in the relationship that exists between fetishism and masochism. Since both masochism and fetishism are descriptive, it is the pornographic language that acts as a replacement for enhancing libidinal sublimation. Apart from presenting Sacher-Masoch's atmospheric style in the description of Renée's bathroom, Maxime's and Renée's erotic games in the conservatory also suggest fetishist and masochist elements which belong to Sacher-Masoch's art of suggestion; this is illustrated when Renée, as the one in charge of exerting erotic pleasure decides on the sexual role that each of them should play:

Chaque pièce, avec son odeur particulière, ses teintures, sa vie propre, leur donnait une tendresse différente, faisait de Renée une autre amoureuse: elle fut délicate et jolie [...] elle se montra fille capricieuse et charnelle, se livrant au sortir du bain, se fut là que Maxime la préféra. (*La Curée*, pp. 484)

The art of suggestion continues in the same passage when Renée takes the leading role and figuratively metamorphoses into an animal on heat. The allusion to an animal is highlighted by the juxtaposition of the 'peau d'ours noir' and the 'sphinx de marbre' which Renée is (and was) compared to at the beginning of the novel (p. 325), but which turns her into an 'adorable bête amoureuse' (p. 485). Renée's arousal heightens the narrator's masochistic desires. This is perceived when Renée and Maxime make love: 'Maxime resta languissant'; in this scene, Renée, who acts as the sadist in this erotic game, seems to be suspended in a frozen climactic sexual pleasure:

Puis ils s'étaient couchés sur cette fourrure d'encre, au bord d'un bassin, dans la grande allée circulaire. Au-dehors, il gelait terriblement. [...] Maxime était arrivé frissonnant, les oreilles et les doigts glacés. La serre se trouvait chauffée à un tel point qu'il eut une défaillance sur la peau de bête. Il entra dans une flamme si lourde [...] qu'il éprouvait des cuissons, comme si on l'eût *battu de verges*. Quant il revint à lui, il vit Renée agenouillée, penchée, avec des yeux fixes, une *attitude brutale qui lui fit peur*. Les cheveux tombés, les épaules nues, elle s'appuyait sur ses poings, l'échine allongée, pareille à une grande chatte aux yeux phosphorescents [...] Renée avait la pose et le sourire d'un monstre à tête de femme, et, dans ses jupons dénoués, elle semblait la sœur blanche de ce dieu noir. (*La Curée*, p. 485, my emphasis)

These sexual episodes have a strong element of sensation and would mostly attract Zola's

readers' curiosity; it is evident that both Nana and Renée are complicit in helping their creator to perpetuate through their sexuality the masculine myth of woman as mysterious. Indeed, the masculine construct of woman demands masculine perceptions and assumptions about her sexualized body. Renée internalizes male perceptions and thus becomes the agent of her own exclusive enigma. For the narrator and for Maxime, Renée's sexual fervours in this passage become enigmatic. She surprises them with her 'attitude brutal and 'échine allongée' as well as her fixed eyes. However, in this passage the narrator puts himself within the perspective of Maxime's masochism; both the narrator and Maxime are the 'happy' victims of Renée's sadism and enigmatic allure, as illustrated by the phrase 'battu de verges' — as if she were beating them — and by her 'attitude brutale'. Although the narrator makes, in this passage, a parallel between Renée and the Sphinx, 'elle semblait la soeur blanche de ce dieu noir', he nevertheless enjoys her transfixed pose since it provides him with a feeling of sexual ecstasy, as it does to Maxime. This scene reinforces the masochistic, climactic nature of this passage, conveyed by the 'photographic' scene in which the frozen image of the torturer is taken. Renée's frozen image, as this passage conveys, holds an important place in masochistic novels: Deleuze observes that in Sacher-Masoch's novels 'it is the moment of suspense that is the climactic moment [...]. This is partly because the masochistic rites of torture [...] imply actual physical suspension (the hero is hung up, crucified or suspended) but also because the woman torturer freezes into postures that identify her with a statue, a painting or a photograph'.¹⁰⁴ Maxime and the narrator are consensually *swallowed* by Renée when they are transfixed by her stare and succumb to her enigmatic femininity: this suggests a displacement of a 'transcendent function, but [also] of a mythical and dialectic order [and functions] as an ideal of pure [erotic] imagination'.¹⁰⁵ As a matter of interest for the reader, Renée's frozen position and her comparison to the Sphinx may also convey Zola's fears of being swallowed by it, since

¹⁰⁴ Deleuze, *Masochism*, pp. 33-35.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 33-35.

the Sphinx swallows her 'male' victims if they do not answer her riddles, thus figuratively castrating them.¹⁰⁶

We have seen in these novels how Zola used his male characters' privileges over female sexuality to express sexual fantasies and fetishist desires. This chapter has diagnosed Zola's preconception of women's femininity by comparing it to evil; it has given an aperçu onto the late nineteenth century's attitude to prostitution and has made reference to the medical and hygienist discourses which prevailed at the time. It has compared other novelists and artists who, together with Zola, represented female sexuality as filth and evil. Part Two of this Chapter focused on the relationship of the narrator with his female characters and concluded that although Zola depicts his century's debauched society, he nonetheless was as attracted to their feminine scent and their bodies as were his male characters. It also pointed to his insecurity towards the female sex and juxtaposed this with the female phantom which haunts the *Rougon-Macquart* texts. Chapters Five and Six will highlight the narrator's entrance into the phallic stage. These chapters will demonstrate how this takes place, but will also reinforce the arguments made in Chapter One about the presence of secrets that permeate these texts.

Chapter Five

Le Docteur Pascal or the Secret exposed

In this chapter, I show how Abraham and Torok's theory of the phantom sustains the arguments already discussed; it strengthens the case made for the mystery which haunts the series.

Part One evaluates to what extent Zola exposes himself as Pascal: it argues that if Pascal is the 'médecin digne et équilibré de l'œuvre', he represents Zola since the novelist's aim in the *Rougon-Macquart* is to observe and 'diagnose' members of his family.¹ The link which I make in this part between Zola and Pascal is important in so far as their relationship is further strengthened in Part Two, and relates to the discovery of the secret.

Part Two shows that Clotilde, as the great-granddaughter of Adelaïde Fouque-Rougon, serves the function of repairing the malfunctioning gene which she inherits from her great-grandmother, because it is in her that the revelation of the Rougon-Macquart's secrets rests. This part also demonstrates the importance of Clotilde's role in this novel: arguably Clotilde replaces Marie, whom I referred to in Chapter Two. In this novel, 'the return of the repressed' is associated with incest. I show that incest takes place between Pascal and Clotilde because it is a necessary factor for the return of Marie. Part Three argues that Zola, as Pascal's split ego, is able to come to terms, through writing, with the secret which haunted him.

¹ Emile Zola, *Le Docteur Pascal*, in *Les Rougon-Macquart*, ed. by Armand Lanoux and Henri Mitterand, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 5 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1960-1967), v, 1568.

Part 1 Zola as Pascal

Le Docteur Pascal presents the reader 'with a historical verisimilitude' since there are important parallels in this novel with Zola's life in Medan. In this novel the 'author projects some of his own experiences onto the author-character'.² After meeting Jeanne Rozerot in 1888, Zola's sexual conflict, insecurity, and misogynist attacks subsided as Jeanne turned Zola into a young man again; the dedication to *Le Docteur Pascal* points to this change in Zola: 'À ma bien-aimée Jeanne, — à ma Clotilde, qui m'a donné le royal festin de sa jeunesse et qui m'a rendu mes trente ans, en me faisant le cadeau de ma Denise et de mon Jacques'.³

Le Docteur Pascal is an analysis of the self and a testimony of doubts, insecurity, betrayal, guilt, and revelation. In 1891 Alexandrine Zola learnt of her husband's relationship with Jeanne, as Jean-Claude Le Blond-Zola remarks: 'et soudain, l'inévitable survint en novembre 1891'.⁴ According to Le Blond-Zola, Alexandrine put pressure on Zola and Jeanne's relationship: this is referred to in the letter which Zola sent to Jeanne advising her to stay away from Alexandrine.⁵ Zola's fears of Alexandrine's discovery and his love for Jeanne are present in this novel, as illustrated in the tension that Pascal's relationship with Félicité (his mother) projects.⁶ Alexandrine played a certain part in the construction of the character of Félicité since she destroys the correspondence that existed between Zola and Jeanne, as Félicité burns Pascal's secret documents relating to his family tree (*Le Docteur Pascal*, pp. 925 and 999).

² Paul Franssen and Ton Hoenselaars (eds.), *The Author as Character: Representing Historical Writers in Western Literature* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1999), p. 20.

³ Zola, *Le Docteur Pascal*, p. 1573.

⁴ Jean-Claude Le Blond-Zola, *Zola à Medan* (Villers sur Morin: Société Littéraire des amis d'Émile Zola, 1999), p. 203.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 203, letter dated 9 November 1891.

⁶ Zola, *Le Docteur Pascal*, pp. 934-36, 983-97, and 1010.

1.1 Emile Zola in Medan/Pascal Rougon in La Soulejade

Although La Soulejade is a fictitious place which represents Medan, it also functions in Zola's unconscious as a place for sexual transgression: Zola's relationship with Jeanne began in Medan. In this novel, their secret affair is fictionally projected in the long corridor which exists between 'la chambre du docteur et celle de la chambre de la jeune fille, aux deux extrémités de la pièce' (*Le Docteur Pascal*, p. 918). The corridor's division between Pascal's and Clotilde's rooms symbolizes the distance that existed between Zola's and Jeanne's different status in the household and their secret love. The operative noun 'extrémité' functions as a narrative tool to hide Pascal/Zola's desire since it indicates, in this case, the forbidden and the inaccessible.

Pascal's room or the position of 'le cabinet d'étude de Pascal' is further investigated by Nicholas White. White argues that the separation between Pascal's and Clotilde's rooms symbolizes their forbidden love: 'Cet espace de l'étude sépare et connecte les deux chambres; donc elle représente à la fois la loi et sa contradiction [...]. Ces deux espaces sont sacrés'.⁷ Daniel Pick also makes a parallel between Zola's love for Jeanne and that of Auguste Comte's 'own idealisation' of Clotilde de Vaux.⁸ Pick compares the novelist's 'paternal' love for Jeanne and draws attention to Zola's 'borrowing' the name of his protagonist from Clotilde de Vaux's father/daughter relationship with Auguste Comte who was much older than her. Pick believes that 'the explosion of Clotilde and Pascal's reciprocal desire draws [...] [Pascal] away from a science which has involved the negation of all passion'. Moreover, he adds that Pascal's love for Clotilde 'might recall, of course Zola's own "paternal passion" for a young woman (Jeanne) late in his life [...]; or indeed, take the name of the protagonist's name, and remember Comte's passion for Clotilde de Vaux' (p. 81). Although Pick is drawing attention to both Comte's and Zola's sexual interest in younger women, he nevertheless fails to highlight that Zola's initial choice for his female character's name was Marie as the preparatory notes for this novel show

⁷ Nicholas White, 'Le Docteur Pascal: entre "l'inceste et l'innéité"', *Cahiers Naturalistes*, 68 (1994), 78.

⁸ Daniel Pick, *Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder, c. 1848-c. 1914*, 2nd edn. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 81.

(*Le Docteur Pascal, Étude*, pp. 1581-84). I discuss the importance that the name of Marie has for Zola in Section 2.3 when I look at Clotilde's story and the place she holds in the family tree.

In this novel, Zola projects his own experiences in relation to his love for Jeanne. This is reflected in the novel's dedication to Jeanne and in its romantic undertone which praises sexuality and maternity. It is also a philosophical testimony in that it reflects self-acknowledgment or 'cognitive completeness' of the family's deeds, as Nicholas White also remarks in his examination of *Le Docteur Pascal*.⁹ Jean-Louis Cabanès shows that a connection which is 'autobiographique [containing] une tonalité lyrique' exists in *Le Docteur Pascal*.¹⁰ Cabanès rightly argues that *Le Docteur Pascal* is 'un roman idéologique' as a 'symbiose de la pensée et du chant' is detected. He remarks that this symbiosis is 'consubstantielle' insofar as 'pensées' and 'chant' are mutually expressive and hence united (p. 193). He insists, however, that *Le Docteur Pascal* is not a poem, but a lyrical novel which praises love and maternity, as expressed through its poetic elements. Admittedly, this novel conveys to a larger extent sensual feelings as reflected in its lyrical undertone, as for example when Pascal makes love to Clotilde for the first time:

Alors, ce fut la possession heureuse, l'idylle heureuse. Clotilde était le renouveau qui arrivait à Pascal sur le tard, au déclin de l'âge. Elle lui apportait du soleil et des fleurs, plein sa robe d'amante; et, cette jeunesse, elle la lui donnait, après les trente années de son dur travail, lorsqu'il était las déjà, et pâissant, d'être descendu dans l'épouvante des plaies humaines. Il renaissait sous ses grands yeux clairs, au souffle pur de son haleine. C'était encore la foi en la vie, en la santé, en la force, à l'éternel recommencement. (*Le Docteur Pascal*, p. 1064)

In his comparison of *Le Docteur Pascal* with *Lourdes*, Adolfo Fernandez-Zoïla underlines Zola's fervent attachment to Jeanne: 'Zola tient à raconter sa récente histoire d'amour. Clotilde incarne Jeanne du moins dans certains épisodes'.¹¹ His analysis of the

⁹ Nicholas White, *The Family in Crisis in Late Nineteenth-Century French Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 98.

¹⁰ Jean-Louis Cabanès, 'Le Docteur Pascal: roman éloquent, roman lyrique', *Excavatio*, 20, 1-2 (2005), 193.

¹¹ Adolfo Fernandez-Zoïla, 'Le Docteur Pascal et Lourdes: une transvaluation des imaginaire', *Cahiers Naturalistes*, 70 (1996), 52. See also, Adolfo Fernandez-Zoïla, 'Les Névropathies de Zola', *Cahiers Naturalistes*, 57 (1983), 33-49

connection between *Le Docteur Pascal* and *Lourdes* is correct: Zola told Edmond de Goncourt that after his visit to Lourdes in September 1891 he experienced the same ‘remuement des âmes’ as the pilgrims did and felt the same religious fervour and love in relation to his feelings for Jeanne. The ‘religious’ love that Zola held for Jeanne is illustrated in Pascal’s desire to die in Clotilde’s room, ‘celle où tous deux s’étaient aimés, où lui n’entraît plus qu’avec un frisson religieux’ (*Le Docteur Pascal*, p. 1173). Clotilde’s room becomes a shrine for Pascal since in it he can worship her. Clotilde represents, for him, a deity because she can fulfil two roles: the one to cure the faulty family’s gene through having sex with Pascal, and the other to represent Marie and return her to her place in the family tree.

Thierry Ozwald considers the didactic mode through which the novelist justifies this new type of writing.¹² Ozwald’s examination shows that it is by fusing the two themes (the philosophical and the scientific) that Pascal becomes the representative of Zola; Ozwald explains that on the one hand, the latter involves the reader with the protagonist’s subjectivity in relation to fears and doubts about love, and on the other hand, associates him with his research on heredity. Through his analysis, Ozwald also highlights the ‘problématique’ of *Le Docteur Pascal* and thus questions the unity of the *Rougon-Macquart* by guiding the reader to the novel’s weaknesses:

L’idée du *Docteur Pascal* ne réside pas exclusivement dans le tour de force [...] mais également, dans ses faiblesses [...]: le livre fourmille de contradictions, de désaveux inattendus, d’erreurs, d’approximations, d’incongruités, de “hic et de couac”: tout se passe comme si “cela ne marchait pas” quoiqu’on fasse, comme si, [...] en dépit des efforts consentis et de l’énergie mise en œuvre, Pascal avait ses raisons que *Le Docteur Pascal* ignore. [Et] comme si, [...] dans la nécessité de conclure, le romancier en venait alors de se découvrir, à se démasquer peu à peu.¹³

¹² Thierry Ozwald, ‘Un remède contre le mal du siècle: *Le Docteur Pascal*, ou l’évangélisme thérapeutique de Zola’, *Cahiers Naturalistes*, 75 (2001), 122.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 122.

Moreover, Pascale Krumm rightly remarks that '*Le Docteur Pascal* [...] manque de cohérence narrative et [...] devient alors difficile d'en cerner l'unité'.¹⁴ It is correct that *Le Docteur Pascal* does not coalesce with the rest of the series; there is a disunity perceived in the novel's historical location. Indeed, if Zola wanted to conclude his series with *Le Docteur Pascal*, then the novel's historical location is incorrect since its plot belongs to the Third Republic and not to the Second Empire. Zola places the action between 1872 and 1874, the time of the birth of Pascal's son. If this novel stands for 'le résumé et la conclusion de toute mon oeuvre', as expressed by the novelist, then its narrative unity is indeed lacking.¹⁵ The Second Empire ended in 1870, when *La Débâcle*'s action was situated. Thus, it is *La Débâcle* that should represent the last novel in the series since it charts the Franco-Prussian War and the Commune. It is not to be assumed that Zola simply disregarded this incongruity; arguably, Zola merges two different regimes into one to symbolize the changes that happened in his life, the financial success brought about by his writing, started with the publication of *L'Assommoir* in 1877, and the arrival of Jeanne in 1888 with whom he found happiness, as Alain Pagès emphasizes whilst referring to Zola's letters to Jeanne.¹⁶ These changes from bad to good or from the Second Empire, a regime which Zola hated, to the Third Republic, constitute 'the turning point for the novelist';¹⁷ more importantly these changes prefigure the end of the novelist's anxiety in relation to female sexuality. As a result, *Le Docteur Pascal* is a supplement to the rest of the series since its true chronological plot unfolds during the Third Republic. This novel is, nonetheless, a necessary supplement since it charts the story of the family's traits in returning to its ancestor's faulty gene by exposing what is hidden in Pascal's documents

¹⁴ Pascale Krumm, '*Le Docteur Pascal*: un (dangereux) supplément? La problématique féminine dans le cycle Zolien', *Cahiers Naturalistes*, 73 (1999), 228.

¹⁵ Zola, *Le Docteur Pascal*, p. 916.

¹⁶ Emile Zola, *Lettres à Jeanne Rozerot, 1892-1902*, ed. by Brigitte Emile-Zola and Alain Pagès (Paris: Gallimard, 2004). pp. 12-13. Pagès tells the reader that Zola was depressed before meeting Jeanne and that his relationship with Alexandrine was faltering. According to Pagès, Zola expressed his feelings in the planning of the novel: 'Moi, le travail, la littérature qui a mangé ma vie, et le bouleversement, la crise, le besoin d'être aimé'.

¹⁷ Pick, *Faces of Degeneration*, p. 81

Part 2 The Connection between Gestation and Heredity in *Le Docteur Pascal*

The return of the repressed is visible in this novel. However, instead of silently transmitting the secret onto Pascal, as the author does with his characters in the novels already examined, Pascal acknowledges it and unravels it. Since Pascal willingly inherits his family 'fêlure', or faulty gene, Pascal's incest with Clotilde is necessary since it cures its diseased branch with his new born child. 'Et il n'en tremblait plus, il ne s'en irritait plus, de cette hérédité manifeste, fatale et nécessaire sans doute' (*Le Docteur Pascal*, p. 1164). Yet, Pascal does not say what he has inherited from the family. It is only when he has been confronted by Clotilde that Pascal indicates what the secret represents.

This examination shows that Pascal has inherited his family's 'depraved' traits. Indeed, the Rougon-Macquart's characters' heredity is generated by a faulty gene which originates in a woman's 'obsessive' need for sex, the consequence of which is the birth and death of an illegitimate child (Marie) as argued for in Chapter Two. It is a woman who belongs to the inner circle of the family who needs to absolve the family of its 'crime', as she re-unites it through her incestuous relationship and the birth of her legitimate Rougon child. Indeed, for Pascal, the birth of his child symbolizes the regeneration of a new world; his son represents, for Pascal, the future 'messie que le prochain siècle attendait, qui tirerait les peuples de leur doute, et de leur souffrance! Puisque la nation était à refaire, celui-ci ne venait-il pas pour cette besogne ?' (p. 1219).

Pascal's cupboard represents the repressed which, in turn, is arguably linked to the female reproductive organ, a place which hides Pascal's secret. I have proposed in Chapter Two that the secret was represented by Adelaïde's betrayal and that Marie represented her illegitimate child whose soul was reincarnated in Miette in *La Fortune des Rougon*. *Le Docteur Pascal* returns to this issue: it is true that this novel returns to the preceding ones, mainly *La Fortune des Rougon*, since it invokes the family's hereditary fault caused by woman's sexuality.

In fact, Zola's perception of women in relation to illegitimate pregnancies is reflected in Pascal through the narrator's *discours indirect*:

Ce qui avait amené le docteur Pascal à s'occuper spécialement des lois de l'hérédité, c'était, au début, des travaux sur la gestation. Comme toujours, le hasard avait eu sa part, en lui fournissant toute une série de cadavres de femmes enceintes, [...]. Plus tard, il avait surveillé les décès, complétant la série, comblant les lacunes, pour arriver à connaître la formation de l'embryon, puis le développement du fœtus à chaque jour de sa vie intra-utérine; [...]. A partir de ce moment, le problème de la conception, au principe de tout, s'était posé à lui, dans son irritant mystère. (*Le Docteur Pascal*, p. 944)

In the above passage, the narrator juxtaposes conception with death, as in 'cadavres de femmes enceintes'; it is assumed that these corpses are those belonging to Thérèse, Renée, Albine, Nana, and others who have had children conceived out of wedlock and who died, some through miscarriages and others through neglect. What is particularly of interest in the above passage is that Pascal's research on heredity is linked to gestation, and to his desire to finish his research on dead fetuses, as illustrated by the phrase 'complétant la série', and to replace the death of an innocent child with another one, as illustrated by the phrase 'comblant les lacunes'. Since the mystery exasperates Pascal, we could juxtapose Pascal's doubts and fears with Zola's uncertainties expressed in *La Vérité en marche* regarding his father's affair (*La Vérité en marche*, p. 286, see Chapter Two). Pascal's continued effort in trying to find an answer to the death of unborn babies might explain Zola's uncertainties. Jean Borie also questions the reason for Zola's refusal to explain what the crime is related to in this novel, but believes that it is linked to the murder of a child:

Jamais, pas même dans *le Docteur Pascal* lorsque Zola résume et passe en revue le cycle tout entier, il ne précise quel est ce premier crime qui accablait la famille de sa malédiction. Tout au plus, peut-on remarquer que le premier roman de la série raconte le meurtre d'un enfant.¹⁸

The representation of illegitimate children is offered in this series as the founding story of the cycle, and is essentially reflected in Marie in *La Fortune des Rougon* who returns to haunt the cycle through Clotilde and Pascal's relationship (see Section 2.3). This is reflected through 'le fil

¹⁸ Borie, *Zola et les mythes*, p. 59.

conducteur du récit', as Borie observes;¹⁹ in other words, the common thread that exists in this series is reflected in the return, in this novel, of *La Fortune des Rougon* and *Thérèse Raquin* (as well as other novels in the series) because these novels are fundamental to resolving the mystery since they hold the Rougon-Macquart's family secret. In this novel, this is illustrated when Pascal shows the ancestral tree to Clotilde and explains the faulty gene by dividing the legitimate Rougon family from the illegitimate Macquart family (*Le Docteur Pascal*, p. 1006). Pascal also points out to Clotilde the hereditary factors which affect the family's descendants, pointing to Adelaïde as holding the 'lésion nerveuse première' (p. 1009) and proceeding to show the consequent effects on the future children, starting with Marthe Mouret's children (pp. 1010-15). Nevertheless, we need to question the reasons for Pascal's concern over his family members: it is because there is an underlying link that connects the Rougon gene.

As far as Pascal's research is concerned, Zola's intention was to retain the principal themes of the series; yet, the actual content and aims of his last novel of the *Rougon-Macquart* series deviate from its initial concept. Pascal's role as a farmer as expressed in the first tree of the *Rougon-Macquart* (1869), changes to that of a doctor in the second. In *Le Docteur Pascal*, Pascal becomes an important character; indeed, he represents 'le médecin digne et équilibré de l'œuvre' (*Le Docteur Pascal*, p. 1568). Pascal as a competent and intelligent doctor is needed to cure the family of its ills, since he holds documents on his family which play 'un rôle important, [qui] sont comme le pivot même de l'oeuvre que j'écris' as Zola remarked in the planning of this novel (p. 1570). Indeed, Pascal's objective in his research is to exhume dead pregnant women in order to study the remains of their foetuses in the hope of being able to 'connaître la formation de l'embryon, puis le développement du foetus, à chaque jour de sa vie intra-utérine' (p. 944). Pascal's research enables him to 'réparer par le semblable'; this is carried out through the conception of a healthy child whose rightful place belongs to the Rougon ancestral tree and replaces Marie. Indeed, in showing Clotilde the

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 59.

family members as set in the family tree, Pascal attempts to revive Marie in his wish to restore her to the family. This is the reason why Zola tells the reader in the planning of the novel that Pascal's documents are crucial to the series: it is such because the birth and neglect of an illegitimate child whose origin Pascal does not wish to divulge, but for the reader is related to Marie and is engraved in these documents. In Section 2.4 I connect Pascal's secret documents to the undecipherable text on Marie's tombstone in *La Fortune des Rougon*.

2.1 Pascal's True Objectives in his Research

It is noticeable that Pascal highlights to Clotilde the bastard branch of the family (p. 1011). For example, when Pascal describes the family to his niece he reinforces the fact that some children have died of neglect (pp. 1008-21). In spite of this, Pascal does not explain the reasons for their death. The clue to resolving this mystery of the dead children which so annoyed Pascal is found in the cupboard that holds the hidden documents of the Rougon-Macquart family and is linked to Clotilde (see Section 2.4).

In the novels in which Pascal is a character, he is the only one in his family who believes he has not been affected by hereditary problems; his mission, as already shown, is to study objectively his ancestors and understand the causes of their defective gene by unearthing the cadavers of pregnant women in order to study their foetuses. However, for Zola, Pascal's role is to enhance the scientific objective of this series. Pascal, as the doctor in *Les Rougon-Macquart*, consequently represents the novelist in this novel to the extent that their relationship is reinforced by their common interest in science, sexuality (in particular female sexuality), and, crucially, pregnant women and their dead foetuses. This last point is important as it reinforces the novelist's interest in babies and in the unborn. I look into Pascal's soul and question the reasons for his need to love Clotilde and perform incest with her.

As already pointed out, Pascal's wish is to 'réparer par le semblable' (p. 948). By expressing such feelings, Pascal indirectly communicates a secret hidden in the family

ancestry, a secret which for Pascal relates to children and to 'life'; he tells Clotilde: 'Mais le continuel miracle, mon enfant, c'est la vie' (p. 953). In this sentence, 'enfant' and 'vie' are juxtaposed and are signifiers for renewal and for life, as Pascal reveals. Indeed, 'enfant' is equal to youth and to growth, thus renewal, and 'vie' suggests continuity, one which will be linked to Pascal's future child, as well as to that of the Rougon family name. Pascal regenerates his youth through Clotilde since through her child-like nature she replaces Marie who should have been sitting in the Rougon family tree; for Pascal, Clotilde is needed to 'comble[r] l[a] lacune' which exists in the family tree (pp. 937-38, 944). Life and children are a miracle for Pascal — he tries to revive and cure diseased people with his own elixir manufactured from a 'substance nerveuse de mouton, dans de l'eau distillée' (p. 949). Giving life to a child is a miracle for Zola too — he fathered two children with Jeanne. In Chapter Five of *Le Docteur Pascal*, when Pascal opens up to Clotilde the family tree, Zola uses Pascal to unravel the Rougon-Macquart's 'effrayante débâcle des faits' which for the reader is related to a secret (p. 1005); Pascal is aware that the secret is about betrayal and the murder of children, hence Pascal's attempts to disentangle the calamity of his family's crime.

Pascal is afraid of the unknown or of what might happen if the secret were discovered; he tells Clotilde: "ces dossiers ne sont pas destinés au public" (p. 998). Despite his unwillingness to reveal what is hidden in the cupboard (or to accept his family's woes), Clotilde is sharp enough to understand that he is the one who wants to hold on to the repressed; she answers her uncle's comments on her need to be more appreciative of science: "Je les ouvre [les yeux], et je ne vois pas tout... C'est toi, maître, qui es un entêté, quand tu ne veux pas admettre qu'il y a, là-bas, un inconnu où tu n'entreras jamais. [...], tu mets l'inconnu à part parce qu'il te gênerait dans tes recherches" (p. 953). Pascal is concerned that if 'l'inconnu' or the secret, is known, the reputation of the Rougon family is at stake, hence the burning of the documents by Félicité. Alexandrine knew of Zola's relationship with Jeanne and perhaps

aware, as well, of other issues which related to her husband; this is arguably reflected in Félicité's anxiety with regard to the discovery of the documents.

2.2 Clotilde's Sexuality

If for Zola (and Pascal) a woman is the cause of sexual inhibitions and repression who has affected — through her 'madness', in this case through Adelaïde's madness — a homo-social environment, one comprised mainly of 'affected' men as the series shows (see my analysis of Jacques in *La Bête humaine*), another woman must repair it so that humanity can achieve perfection. In order to reach this state of well-being, Clotilde is chosen to fulfil this role. Clotilde is part of the female line, she inherits Adelaïde's gene because her father is Aristide Rougon/Saccard and, according to Zola, it is the female line that passes on the 'disease' as implied in the preface of *La Bête humaine*. Yet, madness (as the narrator viewed female sexuality) is ironically related in this novel to Pascal's 'cure', which for him is found in his ability to produce a child since it is through the female line that he is cured of his hereditary gene. However, Clotilde is not a Macquart, but a descendent of the Rougon line: she has inherited the gene through her mother and her grandfather, commandant Sicardot, as Pascal points out to her (*Le Docteur Pascal*, pp. 1020-21). Since she is a member of the female family clan, her role is to redeem their 'crime'. This is carried out through a sacrificial ritual, even though Clotilde is willing to sleep with Pascal; Clotilde's sacrifice functions as *pharmakoi*, the 'ritual slaying of the scapegoat', as interpreted by Naomi Schor.²⁰ Schor sees Zola's 'crowd-fictions [...] as imitations of generic and recurrent action or ritual' which, for her, become 'mythoi', in other words misogynist male artists, poets, and novelists, as demonstrated in Chapter Four, who ritually sacrifice women as retribution for their sexual inhibitions. Clotilde's incest with her uncle Pascal is thus necessary to solve part of the family's secrets (it is ironic that Zola

²⁰ Schor, *Zola's Crowds: Before and After*, p. 4. See Chapter Four, Part One. See also Lowe, *The Fictional Female*.

condemns Renée's incest with Maxime, yet allows Pascal to practise it with Clotilde. I give below the reasons for Zola to present this line of argument in this novel.)

Janet Beizer also believes that Clotilde's story forms part of the 'family secret'.²¹ She juxtaposes *La Fortune des Rougon* with *Le Docteur Pascal* and shows that the last novel in the series leads back to the first one. She argues that 'it is precisely the leading back that recommends a direction of enquiry well summarized by Roquetin's observations, in *La Nausée*, about a certain kind of narrative illusion: "On a l'air de débiter par le commencement... et en réalité c'est par la fin qu'on a commencé".²² Clotilde constitutes the punishment for Adelaïde's act or for passing onto her her 'cerveau fêlé' (*La Fortune des Rougon*, p. 45). Yet, Clotilde is not directly a victim for Pascal, she offers herself to Pascal 'par reconnaissance, [et] par admiration' because he adopted her (*Le Docteur Pascal*, p. 1067). Since this investigation is based on Zola's secrets in relation to his fiction, it is Zola who, as the author, exercises his right to make out of Clotilde the sacrificial victim of her sex, paying for Adelaïde's 'depraved nature'; Clotilde is the victim of the narrator's 'loi expiatoire' (p. 1105) because with this decree, Clotilde's faulty gene is repaired as she tells Pascal: 'Maître, c'est toi qui m'a faite ce que je suis. Comme tu l'as répété souvent, tu as corrigé mon hérédité' (p. 1154).

2.3 The Return of Marie in *Le Docteur Pascal*

The narrator tells us that Pascal's sexual interest in women is practically non-existent, having remained 'garçon' in *La Fortune des Rougon* (p. 68), and having shown 'une timidité trop ombrageuse' in *Le Docteur Pascal* (p. 944). If Pascal is sexually frustrated, as the description suggests, why is it Clotilde who revives in him the wish to enjoy life again? In his plans for this novel, Zola was not initially interested in Clotilde; she was supposed to represent 'une dame de compagnie' (*Le Docteur Pascal*, p. 1581) for another principal character, a friend of Clotilde

²¹ Janet L. Beizer, 'Remembering and Repeating the *Rougon-Macquart*: Clotilde's Story', *Esprit Créateur*, 25, 4 (1985), 51.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 51.

with whom Pascal would fall in love and whom Zola wanted to name 'Marie'. Zola also wanted to show that Pascal saved Marie from obscure circumstances (*Le Docteur Pascal*, p. 1581). Marie is of course a very common name in French. However, the recurrence of the name in the series suggests that Zola had a special attachment to it. Arguably, the Marie whom Zola initially wanted to include in this novel represents the desire to re-instate the Marie of *La Fortune des Rougon*. Nonetheless, Zola changed his mind for some reason and chose Clotilde as the representation of Marie (*Le Docteur Pascal*, p. 1583-84). For the sake of clarity in this argument, I merge Clotilde and Marie into one character, Clotilde (as I did with Miette and Marie in *La Fortune des Rougon*).

Arguably, Clotilde represents Marie; this is illustrated when Clotilde cries out when her uncle does not mention her in the family tree. In this scene, the reader senses that the narrator wishes to highlight a secret through Clotilde since he lets Pascal turn the 'leaf' of her dossier in the family tree so that she is not identified. As proposed, for Zola, Marie belongs to the past; hence Pascal's action of turning the leaf of the family tree: 'Lui, toujours, avait passé cette feuille' (*Le Docteur Pascal*, p. 1020). Yet, Clotilde makes her 'presence' known in reminding Pascal that she 'exists' in the family tree: "Et bien! Maître, et moi là-dedans?" When Pascal does not answer, Clotilde insists: "Oui, moi, que suis-je donc?... Pourquoi ne m'as-tu pas lu mon dossier?" (p. 1020). As for an answer to Clotilde's unexpected question, the narrator is keen to point out that Pascal 'resta muet, comme surpris de la question' (p. 1020). The narrator and Pascal are taken by surprise by Clotilde's question. In posing this question, Clotilde has pierced their resistance to open up to the secret: in this scene, Clotilde has unlocked it and has made Pascal face it. Moreover, the dialogue that passes between both characters is important to this investigation since, through Clotilde's wish to know where her place is in the family tree and through her desire to clarify the "mystère [qui] tout de suite me réclame et m'inquiète" (p. 953), it identifies the secret which Pascal, and arguably Zola, do not

wish to reveal. Indeed, Clotilde/Marie wants to tell the 'world' that she is part of the family tree and should be reinstated because she represents the secret which Pascal hides.

Pascal's attempt to cover up the secret is also illustrated in his ancestor, Adelaïde, and in her relationship with Miette in *La Fortune des Rougon*. In fact, this scene in *Le Docteur Pascal* reminds the reader of the one in which Adelaïde in *La Fortune des Rougon* enters her lodging and finds, to her 'surprise douloureuse' Miette and Silvère (see Chapter Two and *La Fortune des Rougon*). When Pascal refuses to tell Clotilde, he is caught in his own game whilst attempting to hide or efface her name in the family tree. Indeed, there is a parallel running between Silvère's discovery of Adelaïde's secret in *La Fortune des Rougon* and Clotilde searching for Pascal's hidden documents in his cupboard (*Le Docteur Pascal*, pp. 1002-3): Silvère wants to know who Miette/Marie is: 'Le soir, Silvère, préoccupé de son aventure essaya de questionner tante Dide. Peut-être saurait-elle qui était cette Miette qui avait des yeux si noirs et une bouche si rouge' (*La Fortune des Rougon*, p. 177). Arguably, as Silvère challenges Adelaïde to confess her secret, it is in Clotilde that the revelation of the secret rests because in questioning her uncle about her empty name in the family tree, she inadvertently exposes the secret.

There is a connection between *La Fortune des Rougon* (Marie's death) and *Le Docteur Pascal* (Marie's return through Clotilde). If we assume that Zola wanted Marie as a name instead of Clotilde, Marie would have then been re-incarnated in Clotilde; if this were the case, we could argue that Zola believed in the supernatural, yet this would contradict his positivism and his naturalist philosophies.²³ Nonetheless, this helps Pascal/Zola reassure himself that his 'dossiers ne sont pas destinés au public' (*Le Docteur Pascal*, p. 998).

I have argued in the second chapter of this project that Marie represents the mystery which characterizes the secret that pervades both *La Fortune des Rougon* and *Thérèse Raquin*. In *Le Docteur Pascal*, Marie's secret is confirmed through the act of incest between Pascal and

²³ See Chapter Two, notes 6-7.

Clotilde. In other words, incest is needed in order to re-instate Marie to the ancestral tree since she belongs to the family, and, through incest, Clotilde fills the gap left by Marie's premature death. This is important for Zola since *Le Docteur Pascal* represents 'l'anneau du serpent qui se mord la queue' in bringing back Marie into this novel.²⁴

2.4 Pascal's Documents

Although Marie is dead, she plays a prominent role in the making of the *Rougon-Macquart* because her phantom follows the narrator: the first novel of the series was initially titled *Les Origines*. Zola asserts this in his preface to the novel; I have already discussed this point in Chapter Two, where I argued that the cemetery where Marie was buried was part of the origin of Plassans since it is through her death, or murder, that the curse of the family starts. I have also suggested that Zola created, in this novel, in the image of the fragment of the half-eroded stone, an indecipherable epitaph. I explained that Marie's secret was represented in there, particularly in the epitaph's lettering since it cannot be read. In the same chapter, I demonstrated that *Thérèse Raquin* belongs as well to the *Rougon-Macquart* series, since it functions as a common thread, given Thérèse's own secret in relation to her origin, to her betrayal of Camille and to the 'murder' of her baby through her induced miscarriage (*Thérèse Raquin*, p. 278). I have also stated that the death of an illegitimate baby constitutes the mystery that is held in Pascal's cupboard — and in Thérèse's closet or in her *mercerie* (*Thérèse Raquin*, p. 33). These inscriptions (the black lettering of Thérèse's 'Mercurie' and Marie's epitaph) are also related to Pascal's own secret since it is dark. The headstone's half-buried position in the earth symbolically mirrors Pascal's hidden documents and the black letters of the word 'Mercurie' give away, by their colour of mourning, the death of Marie caused by Adelaïde's crime of passion. If Pascal's cupboard symbolizes anxieties caused by women, then

²⁴ According to Mitterand, Zola told Edmond de Goncourt: 'Dans ce *Docteur Pascal*, j'ai dû me livrer à beaucoup d'études, d'investigations de recherches, pour que ce dernier livre de la série des *Rougon-Macquart* eût un lien avec les autres... pour que l'œuvre eût quelque chose de l'anneau du serpent qui se mord la queue' (*Les Rougon-Macquart*, v, 1569).

the connection between the dead Marie's half-hidden epitaph and Pascal's *concealed* dossiers relates to the uterus, by virtue of the hidden nature of the female reproductive organ. We could argue that the black lettering of 'Mercerie' highlights Thérèse's criminal nature since she has miscarried. Thus, bringing Marie's phantom back in *Le Docteur Pascal* is necessary to the structure of the *Rougon-Macquart*.²⁵

As already demonstrated, Marie is the one who haunts the cycle because her story was the prominent one in the series and, as explained, by the presence of a phantom which roams through Zola's fiction, one which troubles Pascal in his research with its mystery. It is therefore the connection made with Marie in *La Fortune des Rougon* that unfolds the secret which Pascal does not yet wish to reveal, as Clotilde tells him: "Tu mets l'inconnu à part" (*Le Docteur Pascal*, p. 953). Pascal still refuses to open up to the secret, as he tells Clotilde: "Oui, [...] tâcher de tout connaître, et surtout ne pas perdre la tête avec ce qu'on ne connaît pas, ce qu'on ne connaîtra sans doute jamais !" (p. 936). We should remember that Pascal believes that his documents are not destined for the public.

In this novel, incest acts as the principal factor to release a suppressed trauma, because it cures it by repeating it, as Pascal suspects: 'Aurait-il la douleur de voir la tare renaître en ses moelles?' (p. 1043). Although Pascal fears incest, he believes it is necessary in order to preserve the Rougon family unit. In practising incest, Pascal preserves and keeps the family unit together and forbids any strangers to break the circle, as his anxiety over Dr Ramon's interest in Clotilde illustrates. Pascal eventually accepts his family's heredity by sleeping with Clotilde: in other words in opening his cupboard where the concealed documents are held, Pascal opens the door to the mystery of conception, one which he so eagerly needed to understand, and thus releases Marie's secret by unlocking Clotilde's virginity (symbolized by the key which she stole from him — at this stage Pascal is also a virgin). Since Pascal's cupboard symbolizes the uterus, Marie's death is therefore connected to the secret

²⁵ See also Chapter Two, notes 6-7.

that Pascal holds in his cupboard. Indeed, it is Clotilde's 'obligation' (as a woman) to undo the uterus's dark nature (as understood by the author) since through this act she redeems women's 'sins' and replaces Marie Rougon's illegitimate birth with her newborn, Pascal Rougon's legitimate son. With this view of female sexuality in mind, Zola makes Pascal find sexual fulfilment and happiness through Clotilde.

Zola's 'two radically opposite visions of reality' are both 'optimist[ic]-or-pessimist[ic]' and are reflected in his work, as Michael Lastinger remarks.²⁶ Although Lastinger's examination of *Le Docteur Pascal* is related to Zola's philosophical view of humanity, it nonetheless points to the ambiguity of the novelist's feelings towards women. This is illustrated in Pascal's 'promethean' dream of healing the world through women, because Pascal/Zola believes they are the ones who have greatly contributed to the creation of life.²⁷ In other words, women heal the world's woes through creating a child (as Zola's *Fécondité* (1898) confirms). This is the reason behind Pascal's promethean dreams. Lastinger also remarks that 'it is only through Pascal's scientific failure that he comes to the agonizing joy of accepting his position within the ill-fated family from whose woe he thought himself exempt'.²⁸ Lastinger's comments would have been stronger had he argued that Pascal's acceptance of his position is achieved through women. In other words, having previously feared the consequences of his heredity, Pascal accepts it after being told that he will become a father, as this quotation shows: 'Et il n'en tremblait plus, il ne s'en irritait plus, de cette hérédité manifeste, fatale et nécessaire sans doute' (p. 1164). Pascal produces a child who, through its birth, renews Marie's legitimate place in the family tree; this is reflected towards the end of the novel after Pascal dies and Clotilde sees to it that her son is inscribed in the family tree as a Rougon. We could also argue that after Zola died, out of love and respect Alexandrine saw to it that Denise and Jacques (Zola's children with Jeanne his mistress) were given their father's surname and adopted them.

²⁶ Michael Lastinger, "'Le Pari de Pascal': Zola and Nietzsche's Myth of Return', *Excavatio*, 4 (1994), 68.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

Incest, in this novel, serves another function: its contributing factor is adultery. Indeed, incest is needed so that the family unit remains intact through adultery: in other words, Pascal, as the legitimate descendant of Adelaïde's first husband Rougon, must keep the legitimate side of the family together in order to eliminate the outsider, Antoine Macquart. Clotilde, as suggested before, constitutes the punishment under the 'loi expiatrice' which was passed on to Adelaïde by the narrator for the 'vie rouge de passion et de torture' which she led in *La Fortune des Rougon* (*Le Docteur Pascal*, p. 1105). Antoine Macquart represents for Pascal the outsider, and the outsider represents the sexually forbidden, transgressing the law of the family unit, and thus deserves to die. This is illustrated in Macquart's death by combustion in this novel; by his death, the perpetrators of the original crime, Adelaïde and Macquart, are punished.²⁹ Yet, Pascal attempts to purge this transgression through incest with Clotilde. Zola's two opposite visions of reality merge in this novel into a single, complicated, and ambiguous one, as illustrated in Pascal: on the one hand he is ashamed of the family secret; and on the other hand, he undertakes another unpleasant societal crime, incest. Although Pascal realizes that sex with Clotilde is wrong, he nevertheless accepts it because to him, she represents the 'poussée légitime' and the 'branche saine' of the family tree or of the Rougon side, and in practising incest he reunites the legitimate family and discards the illegitimate one.

Nicholas White also finds a relationship between incest and adultery and rightly argues that incest in *Le Docteur Pascal* is derived from a 'reactionary response to [Zola's] own narrative of sexual uncertainty'.³⁰ White also remarks in the same passage that 'these contrary transgressions [adultery and incest] represent the critical extremes of the regular systole and diastole of the social organism, though both threaten the order of family life'. Arguably, Zola's sexual uncertainty is derived from the threat to the order of the Zola family and from fears that the family's name might dissolve by allowing a stranger to enter its circle. This threat, in

²⁹In his work *Totem and Taboo*, Freud highlights the law of Australian aborigines who imposed the death penalty on whoever strayed outside the family unit to mate with an outsider.

³⁰White, *The Family in Crisis*, p. 100.

the form of Zola's adultery, emerges however in *Le Docteur Pascal* as incest, but, in reality, it is the novelist's sexual relationship with a much younger woman (Zola was forty-eight years old in 1888, Jeanne was twenty-two). Through his adultery with Jeanne, the son (Zola) inhabits the father's image, emulating and identifying with him, since the survival of the family's order depends solely on internal (sexual) relations, thus 'preserv[ing] the integrity of the family unit', as Jane Ford remarks. Ford sees incestuous families as 'reflections of each other'.³¹

2.5 The Œdipus Complex in Relation to Incest

Apart from the link that exists between adultery and incest in *Le Docteur Pascal*, an œdipal complex is apparent in this novel. Ford also observes that: 'in an incestuous family, the attraction towards a family member is also a manifestation of an Œdipus complex'. In the same passage, she gives the example of Sophocles's *Œdipus Rex* (c. 420 BC), and shows how this play's 'incest participants [...] often discover the incriminating relationship only after incest has occurred'.³² Although Zola had entered, so to speak, the individuation process by the time he met Jeanne (and possibly after his mother died in 1888), he nonetheless regresses, through the persona of Pascal, to the œdipal stage. As Pascal belongs to the family, he presents incestuous characteristics which emerge from his relationship with Clotilde: she represents, through her maternity and most importantly through her (anterior) virginity, the image of his mother. Pascal tells Clotilde that he was rejected by his mother (*Le Docteur Pascal*, p. 1021); owing to this, Pascal behaves like other members of his family (Serge, Jacques, Claude, Etienne, Nana, and Gervaise). He also needs the maternal figure to overcome his sexual inhibitions and he achieves this with Clotilde. Pascal enjoys incestuous sex because he also needs to return to the infantile stage of sexuality.

³¹Jane Ford, *Patriarchy and Incest from Shakespeare to Joyce* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998), p. 8. Ford quotes in the same passage Robert Masters who also discusses the function of narcissism in incest: 'each individual would marry that person who most closely resembles himself'. See Robert, L Masters, *Patterns of Incest: A Psycho-Social Study of Incest Based on Clinical and Historic data* (New York, NY: Julian Press, 1963).

³²Ibid., p. 8

In Chapter One of the novel, Pascal is standing by the cupboard (p. 936): it is the cupboard (as a metaphor for the uterus) that unlocks the door to his anxieties as already illustrated, but it is effectively Clotilde who ‘opens the door’, with the key that she returns to Pascal, the recovery of his sexual identity. In practising incest, Pascal on the one hand revives and/or re-enacts infantile sexuality which he did not experience from his mother due to rejection (*Le Docteur Pascal*, p. 1021), and on the other hand enjoys the relationship with his niece. As a willing participant, Pascal is aware that incest is necessary since for him this relationship is ‘fatale sans doute, mais nécessaire’ (p. 1164). Nicholas White also finds a relationship between incest and the Œdipus complex: he agrees with Evelyne Hesse-Fink whom he quotes and who argues that in incest ‘[c]’est sûrement le destin d’Œdipe qui nous vient à l’esprit spontanément quand on se penche sur le thème de l’inceste’.³³ Indeed, it is Œdipus who resolves the enigma of the Sphinx, as White observes when he reflects on Zola’s misogyny in relation to women:

Cet intérêt pour l’infini chez Clotilde convient à l’infini de son sexe dont Pascal va combler la lacune pour mener à bien sa vie et son œuvre. Signe d’une paranoïa misogyne, c’est la femme qui est censée « couvrir » la fameuse fêlure. [...] Elle est la non-représentable de la mimesis.³⁴

It is significant that White uses the verb ‘couvrir’, to brood, in relation to women’s heredity in the *Rougon-Macquart*; in so doing, he figuratively associates the ‘fêlure’ which the *Rougon-Macquart* women have with pregnancy, as the verb ‘couvrir’ suggests. We could argue that White also suspects that Zola is holding a secret in the *Rougon-Macquart* series. This strengthens furthermore the argument for the possible secret which, as proposed in this project, lies beyond the narrative of the selected novels, since the verb ‘couvrir’ functions in this quotation as a metaphor for gestation and is related to women.

Although the reader is told that Clotilde is twenty-five years old, she is described by the narrator as looking eighteen, which gives her the look of an adolescent: ‘Sa nuque penchée

³³ White, *The Family in Crisis*, p. 4. See also, Evelyne Hesse-Fink, *Études sur le thème de l’inceste dans la littérature française* (Bern and Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1971), p. 7.

³⁴ White, ‘*Le Docteur Pascal: entre “l’inceste et l’innéité”*’, *Cahiers Naturalistes*, 68 (1994), 79.

avait surtout une adorable jeunesse, d'une fraîcheur de lait, sous l'or des frisures folles [...]. Malgré ses vingt-cinq ans, elle restait enfantine et en paraissait à peine dix-huit.' (p. 918). The comparison of Clotilde's features to those of an adolescent reinforces the need for Pascal to revive an infantile sexuality through her; she reflects the repressed in holding the key, and, through the sacrifice of her virginity, answers the mystery that her sexual 'dark continent', or her uterus, embodies. Yet, the narrator places her sexuality between that of a teenager and that of a woman, as the following quotation suggests when he compares it to 'un bouton aux chastes voiles [qui], s'ouvrait dans un coin' (p. 921). Pascal reflects infantile needs since with Clotilde, as a representation of his mother, he manifests an oedipal complex: 'ses épaules adorables étaient un lait pur, une soie blanche, polie, d'une infinie douceur' [...]. Et elle gardait sa pudeur de vierge, comme un fruit que nulle main n'a touché' (pp. 937-38). The narrator's representation of Clotilde as the Virgin Mary supports the argument made for Pascal's oedipal complex since it imparts an image of a child in communion with the maternal. This subsequently reinforces Pascal's attraction towards this double image, child-mother, which in turn is reflected as a desire that travels between Clotilde (the object of his desire), and Pascal (the subject), becoming oedipal and narcissistic, and thus incestuous.

Part 3 Pascal as Zola's Split Ego

In his work on the relationship between the self and the other in literary structure, René Girard identifies in the novels an œdipal triangle which he believes is the product of an 'original triangle of desire' stemming from an incestuous relationship born between an author, his narrator, and the protagonist(s), one 'that extends from one end of novelistic literature to the other'.³⁵ Furthermore, in his analysis of the connection between psychoanalysis and literature, Gray Kochhar-Lindgren asserts that 'the subject is constituted by language, and language [is] formed by the subject'.³⁶ Kochhar-Lindgren's analysis supports that of Girard's theory of the œdipal triangle in that, through language, œdipal desire is established between author, narrator, and protagonists, as demonstrated above. Girard's and Kochhar-Lindgren's theories function well in the *Rougon-Macquart* as an original triangle of desire which becomes narcissistic since the subject (Zola) reflects himself in the language; indeed, it is through language that the mirror image between author, protagonists, and narrator takes place since they are linked to the secret through the novels' lineage (Marie, Silvère, Miette, Pascal, Clotilde). In *Le Docteur Pascal* this tripartite relationship is mirrored in Zola, the narrator, and Pascal, since they are all interested in and attracted to Clotilde/Jeanne as representing the image of their lover. This is shared by the three and is formulated as follows: Zola writes about desire, the narrator evokes it through his discourse, and Pascal practises it (see Chapter One, section 4.1). Indeed, the subjects under consideration here (Pascal, the narrator, and Zola) are searching for a mirror image of the Mother and Clotilde/Jeanne supplies it; this relationship becomes, therefore, a focused trilateral relationship which highlights Girard's theory of the original incestuous triangle of desire: Pascal/Zola's object of cathexis is reflected in Clotilde/Jeanne; in other words, Clotilde/Jeanne is the psychic representation of the mother

³⁵ René Girard, *Desire and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure*, trans. by Yvonne Fresco (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1966), pp. 94-5.

³⁶ Gray Kochhar-Lindgren, *Narcissus Transformed: The Textual Subject in Psychoanalysis and Literature* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 1993), p. 9.

construct to Pascal and his libido is directed at her. As Pascal and Clotilde reflect each other through their œdipal linkage (Clotilde is also looking for a father/mother figure given her orphan status) and incestuous needs, they become narcissistic and the function of narcissism is to 'see the reflection of each other in incestuous families', as Robert Masters emphasizes in his work on the way incest works in family patterns.³⁷ Pascal and Clotilde do resemble each other in that they come from the same blood line, having both been rejected.

Moreover, Pascal sees Clotilde as part of him. This is reflected in Chapter One when Félicité and Clotilde attempt to burn the files: 'Toi que j'ai faite, toi qui est mon élève, mon amie, mon autre pensée [...]! Ah ! oui, j'aurais dû te garder toute entière pour moi' (*Le Docteur Pascal*, pp. 934-35). Clotilde sees herself also in Pascal, since 'elle ne pouvait employer les mots d'oncle ou de parrain' (p. 920); both mirror each other in their search for the self. Pascal's preservation of the family unit is furthermore reflected in the jealousy that he feels towards his colleague Ramon. Pascal's wish to send Clotilde to her brother is but a wish to 'preserve the incestuous unit' and to 'eliminate[s] the admission of a stranger (Ramon) into an established bloodline, where that bloodline is already deemed optimal'.³⁸

3.1 Guilt as Part of the Masochistic Desire

Pascal shows signs of guilt before and after having gratified his libidinal desire with Clotilde, his narcissistic ego; this is expressed through a masochistic wish to be punished. Yet, it is not clear whether guilt is related to masochism in this novel. It would appear to be so in this case since Pascal expresses masochistic feelings after having satisfied his incestuous desire with his niece. This change is illustrated in his wish to die through pain: 'Le désir lui était venu de mourir dans l'autre chambre, celle de Clotilde, celle où tous deux s'étaient aimés [...]. [O]ù il s'était couché pour mourir' (pp. 1173-74). 'Désir' and 'mourir' are antagonistic words as they oppose each

³⁷ Ford quotes Masters in, *Patriarchy and Incest from Shakespeare to Joyce*, p. 19. See Masters, *Patterns of Incest: A Psycho-Social Study of Incest Based on Clinical and Historic data*.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

other and originate from the Eros and Thanatos impulses; however, for Pascal they function as purification for his sin. In other words, Pascal needs to love in order to die. Pascal's agony is reinforced by the dichotomous phrases 'où il avait tant aimé' and 'où il s'était couché pour mourir'. This is depicted through the juxtaposition of the verbs 'aimé' and 'mourir', which connects to the signifier 'couché' and functions as a pleasurable feeling that travels between the feelings of love and death. Pascal, as a masochist, receives pleasure through pain, a process which he perceives as a ritual; one which he believes will absolve and cleanse his family's inherited defects through a regenerative process. Indeed, through the knowledge that he can engender a son, the legitimate line of the Rougons is secured by the birth of Pascal's son. Since he does not want to reveal the documents concealed in his cupboard, and since the cupboard symbolizes the matrix, then the fear of having the documents burnt suggests that he wants the current condition of his relationship with Clotilde to continue, in order to 'établir que tout ce que l'homme reçoit en sensation, il doit le rendre en mouvement' (p. 1159). In accepting his genetic defect and repeating it with his niece, Pascal acknowledges 'les lois naturelles' that govern his family (p. 1164). He accepts what his ancestors have done by repeating the same deed since Pascal sees these as natural laws governing man's behaviour, in particular incest:

Au contraire, une humilité le prenait, la certitude que toute révolte contre les lois naturelles est mauvaise. Pourquoi donc, autrefois, triomphait-il, exultant d'allégresse, à l'idée de n'être pas de sa famille [...] ? Rien n'était moins philosophique. Les monstres seuls poussaient à l'écart. Et être de sa famille, mon Dieu! cela finissait par lui paraître aussi bon, aussi beau que d'être d'une autre. (*Le Docteur Pascal*, p. 1164)

Pascal knows his action is a crime, yet he allows it to happen as he believes that by the law of probability, he is doomed to inherit his family defect, as the above quotation demonstrates.³⁹

In this passage, Zola is employing his positivist stance on his protagonist because he believes in

³⁹ See Harry Alpert, 'Emile Durkheim: Enemy of Fixed Psychological Elements', *The American Journal of Sociology*, 63, 6 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 662-64. Was Zola reflecting Emile Durkheim's theory of incest and possibly approving of it? It appears that Zola saw incest in Pascal's and Clotilde's relationship as a Darwinian natural prerogative, as expressed by Pascal on p. 1164? See also Larry Arnhart, 'The Incest Taboo as Darwinian Natural Right', in *Inbreeding, Incest and the Incest Taboo*, ed. by Arthur P. Wolf (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), pp.190-217.

hereditary laws and natural factors which affect individuals. Despite the fact that he wishes to cleanse himself of his heredity, Pascal regresses into the 'milieu' by projecting an internal desire to return to it. This is highlighted in Chapter Twelve when Pascal deliberates over his imminent death:

Puis, l'idée de ses dossiers lui apparut soudain. S'il mourait tout d'un coup, sa mère resterait la maîtresse, elle les détruirait [...]. Ainsi se consommerait le crime qu'il avait tant redouté, dont la seule crainte, pendant ses nuits de fièvre, le faisait se relever frissonnant [...]. Et tout de suite, il revint à Clothilde (*Le Docteur Pascal*, p. 1166).

Although Pascal fears that Félicité will burn the files, it appears that it is Pascal who wants to keep his secret undisclosed, but also wants to practise the 'crime tant redouté' (p. 948). In other words, Pascal wants Clotilde back since, for him, it is important to continue the bloodline of the legitimate side of the family. Pascal has cleansed his family's faulty hereditary gene by repeating the ills. In other words, Pascal has 'revisit[ed] the scene of [his] trauma [...] through a compulsion to repeat'.⁴⁰

In conclusion, *Le Docteur Pascal* is 'un ouvrage réparateur' simply by the antithetical cure that a woman, Clotilde, provides through incest. Pascal has taken his 'propre famille en exemple' (p. 929) in order to represent 'la réalité vivante [qui] dessinait la théorie' (p. 946), yet allowed Félicité to burn the documents so that the 'renseignements les plus intimes' (p. 929) remain a secret.

⁴⁰ Suzanne Rait, 'Freud's Theory of Metaphor', in *Literature, Sciences and Psychoanalysis 1830-1970: Essays in Honour of Gillian Beer*, ed. by Helen Small and Trudi Tate (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 21.

Chapter Six
The Nature of Truth in *Vérité*

In this final Chapter, I consider *Vérité* as an anticlerical and political diatribe. I discuss the anti-Semitic and religious themes that pervade this novel. I emphasize as well that this novel reflects trauma both at national and personal levels. This chapter is divided into two parts: the first part focuses on trauma at the national level. In the second part, I discuss to what extent national trauma is a fictionalized version of personal trauma.

Part 1 *Vérité* and National Trauma

In his preface to *Vérité*, Thierry Pacquot remarks: ‘ce roman est celui de la honte et pas seulement du désir de justice’.¹ Pacquot rightly sees the xenophobic feeling that the French held at the time of the Dreyfus Affair as shameful. Henri Mitterand also states that *Vérité* is haunted by the affair. Zéphirin’s rape and murder is an allegory of the Dreyfus Affair: in transposing the political events of the Dreyfus Affair to the fictional rape and murder of Zéphirin, Zola manifests an abhorrence of anti-Semitism and highlights as well his republican and anticlerical views about a corrupt society; he adopts a messianic role in order to awaken his readers’ conscience by denouncing hypocritical political, religious, and anti-Semitic establishments.

Zola’s theme of heredity in the *Rougon-Macquart* series functions as well in *Vérité* since a decadent society, represented by insular and racist Maillebois residents resistant to secular teaching and parochial in their religious stance, also manifests neurotic and degenerative behaviour. I examine, in this part, the anticlerical and anti-Semitic themes that prevail in this novel and show that they reinforce Zola’s political crusade against a corrupt Third Republic.

Pacquot rightly remarks that *Vérité* ‘n’est pas seulement une transposition de l’affaire Dreyfus, c’est aussi une réflexion sur l’autre, celui qui vient d’ailleurs, qui dérange et inquiète’. Pacquot’s observation strengthens the theory of the phantom that exists in Zola’s fiction in that this novel also reflects ‘the return of the repressed’. Contrary to the previously examined texts, in *Vérité*, Zola adheres to his definition of the novel since the novelist ‘comme le chirurgien, [...] n’a ni honte, ni répugnance, lorsqu’il fouille les plaies humaines. Il n’a de souci que de la vérité [...]. [L’] imagination est réglée par la vérité [...]’.² In this novel, Zola emphasizes the notion of truth about a crime perpetrated on innocents, primarily Simon and Zéphirin, and

¹ Thierry Pacquot, ‘Préface’, in Emile Zola, *Les Quatre Évangiles, Vérité* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1993).

² Emile Zola, ‘Deux définitions du roman’, in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Henri Mitterand, 15 vols (Paris: Cercle du Livre Précieux, 1966-70), x, 281-82. See also Colette Becker, *Zola, le saut dans les étoiles* (Paris: Presse de la Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2002), p. 256.

denounces it as shameful. Nevertheless, critics agree that the novel's plot is a retelling of the Dreyfus Affair.

Elinor Accampo and Christopher Forth, for example, argue that the Dreyfus Affair 'was the most divisive "event" of the period that had, for decades, been the preserve of conventional political and social historians'.³ Both Accampo and Forth stress the attention given to the Dreyfus Affair 'by sympathizing with the humanitarian and apparent philo-semitic perspectives of the Dreyfus' supporters' (p. 6). Evidently, the Dreyfus's Affair was a 'deeply embedded political event which was concerned as well with gendered, corporeal and racial issues' (p. 6). Fears of national degeneration were omnipresent and the question of the nature of French identity was shaken by the Dreyfus Affair.⁴ Roger Price emphasizes that the Catholic Church participated quite openly in a wider and often reactionary alliance, and overtly condemned any social or industrial changes.⁵ According to Price, the official stance of the Church was rigid and uncompromising since it wanted to keep its existing social hierarchy.

Joseph Reinach defines *Vérité* as the transposition of the Affair; he sees the novel as representing 'la transposition de l'affaire Dreyfus dans le monde des instituteurs laïques en lutte avec les ignorantins'.⁶ Arguably, Reinach is referring to the Catholic priests' insular view of the affair. Furthermore, Paul Bourget remarks too that the affair relates to '[une] funeste guerre civile à laquelle une retentissante affaire judiciaire servit de prétexte plus que de cause'.⁷ In his examination of France's political parties, Theodore Zeldin describes the Third Republic as 'one of the most confusing and paradoxical of political regimes'.⁸ He argues that the 'real problem between Catholics and Republicans was equal to a crisis of communication'

³ Forth and Accampo, (eds.), *Confronting Modernity in Fin-de-Siècle France*, p. 60.

⁴ See Jessica Rosalind Irons, *Defying a Decadent Democracy: A Comparative Study of the Works of Paul Bourget and Emile Zola*, (2000), Durham E-Theses, Durham University. <<http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/4243/>> [accessed May 2014].

⁵ Roger Price, *A Social History of Nineteenth-Century France* (London: Hutchinson, 1979), p. 261.

⁶ Joseph Reinach, *L'Histoire de l'Affaire Dreyfus: le procès de 1894*, 3rd edn (Paris: Fasquelle, 1908), p. 181.

⁷ Paul Bourget, *L'Étape*, (Paris: Plon, 1911), p. 13.

⁸ Theodore Zeldin, *France 1848-1945: Ambition, Love and Politics*, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), I, 570.

(p. 570). As Evlyn Gould shows, '*Vérité* is set in the period of the rhetoric of the public school debates, but these debates become intertwined with the events of the Dreyfus Affair and open onto Zola's solution to the "Jewish question" in France'.⁹ Gould rightly points out that for Zola, 'the training of young French republicans is the solution' (p. 56). Apart from shaming the insular and anti-Semitic society of Maillebois, Zola also highlights the battle that took place between religious and secular modes of teaching young children during the Third Republic. Zola gives this task to Marc in order to train the minds of young republicans in teaching them not to fear a God without forgiveness, but to think with reason and logic. Indeed, this novel links the issue of education to the new voices of opposition provided by the Dreyfus case: clerics and republicans become 'nationalists' and 'intellectuals'.¹⁰ Zola does this by merging the national debate over education with the events of the Dreyfus Affair. This part stresses Zola's concerns over the political, social, and religious deterioration of France which, for him, reflected the decline of the Republic.

In Chapter Four I demonstrated how Zola highlighted the Second Empire's decadence and argued that this was projected in the representation of a corrupt society. In *Vérité* Zola embodies this in the Maillebois society because its deterioration arises from a hereditary environment (the propagation of the influence of the Church's teachings mainly the clerics and other groups who held anti-Semitic beliefs). For the novelist, these types, such as Frère Gorgias, Père Philibin, Crabot, and Cognasse, as well as some members of Maillebois society, Madame Duparque, Mademoiselle Rouzaire, and others, represent for Zola pathological or neurotic degenerates. Whilst emphasizing their reluctance to accept social, educational and cultural progress, Zola also underlines their insularity and their anti-Semitic stance. Furthermore, the clerics who belong to that society are also complicit in such debased views. Zola highlights their hypocritical Christian 'teaching'; they aid Gorgias to hide his crime, and, by

⁹ Evlyn Gould, *Dreyfus and the Literature of the Third Republic: Secularism and Tolerance in Zola, Barrès, Lazare and Proust* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2012), p. 56.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

implication, other priests as well. This is stressed by the collective thoughts of Maillebois's inhabitants as illustrated in the narrator's discourse: when the rape and murder of Zéphirin has been made public, the people of Maillebois come together to condemn the crime but also to reminisce about another one, the possible rape of another child. 'On se souvenait d'une sale histoire étouffée l'année précédente, d'un Frère que ses supérieurs avait fait disparaître, pour lui éviter la cour d'assises' (p. 39). The reference to the 'cour d'assises' suggests that the crime was related to the sexual assault of a young child.¹¹ The *cour d'assises* was where serious crimes such as murder and violent offences were tried. William A. Peniston investigates sexual identity in nineteenth-century Paris and focuses mainly on male same-sex relations; Peniston tracks the activities of pederasts in respect of same-sex practices, he shows that in order to be considered by the French judicial system as a 'willing participant the boys had to be thirteen or older, although custom age of consent was fifteen' (p. 19). Peniston also remarks that 'the [French] law regarding sexual assault was frequently used against adult men who were accused of molesting boys and girls under the age of consent [especially those] who acted as a parent or guardian, or a teacher, servant or priest [...]. Newspapers throughout the nineteenth century usually reported cases involving priests and choirboys, teachers and pupils' (p. 19). Peniston further stresses that 'this crime was the most common felony prosecuted in France'. He gives examples of cases involving teachers and young boys (p. 20). 'All these cases' Peniston continues, 'dealt with child molestation, which was a serious and common criminal problem in nineteenth-century France' (p. 21). In Part Two, I investigate if Zola used Zéphirin's rape, or 'sexual assault' - a term used by Peniston who argues that 'rape was defined exclusively as a crime of men against women, specifically as vaginal intercourse by force' (p. 19) - as an indirect reference to nineteenth-century child molestation, or used this crime in this novel to highlight personal trauma as well.

¹¹ William A. Peniston, *Pederasts and Others: Urban Culture and Sexual Identity in Nineteenth-Century Paris* (Binghamton, NY: Haworth Press, 2004); 2nd edn: (New York and Abingdon: Routledge, 2011).

Zola rejects celibacy for Catholic priests; for him, celibacy entices the clerics into homosexuality and paedophilia. Peniston also shows that in the works of Helvetius and Diderot (see Diderot's *La Religieuse*, 1796) clerical celibacy 'was the greatest crime because it was an unnatural and enforceable state of being'.¹² In this passage, Peniston refers to 'l'Abbé Desfontaines' conviction of solicitations, [who] managed to escape [the guillotine] because this type of man held socially prominent positions' (p. 14).

In his comparison between Oscar Wilde and Zola, Andrew Counter also highlights Zola's views on religious laws over clerical celibacy and emphasizes Zola's belief that celibacy can lead to homosexuality.¹³ Indeed, Counter alludes to Zola's understanding that 'homosexuality negates [...] procreation and it is in this light that Zola's phrase "l'amour qui ne fait pas d'enfants" is relevant'. Counter refers to Pierre Froment in Zola's *Paris* (1897), and stresses Pierre's loss of Catholic faith in return for sex (he falls in love with his brother's fiancée). He shows that Zola strengthens Pierre's abhorrence towards same sex in priests; in the narrator's words, '[Pierre] avait cherché la foi totale, il s'était jeté dans la négation totale. Et cette hautaine attitude qu'il avait gardée..., cette réputation de saint prêtre qu'il s'était faite, lorsque le néant seul l'habitait, n'était-ce pas encore un désir mauvais de l'absolu, la simple pose romantique de son aveuglement et de son orgueil? (410-11)'.¹⁴ Counter stresses that for Zola, the 'non-reproductivity of Pierre's identity locates him alongside the homosexual, beyond the pale of ideological toleration (687)'.¹⁵

In *Vérité*, Zola portrays an unrestrained decadent society and highlights the fin-de-siècle bitter political conflict between the Catholic and Republican camps. Indeed, Zola reflects anticlerical views which relate to his republican and positivist stances. In this novel, he attempts to undermine the Church's influence over children's education and women, and its

¹² Peniston, *Pederasts and Others*, pp. 14-15.

¹³ Andrew J. Counter, "'One of Them": Homosexuality and Anarchism in Wilde and Zola', *Comparative Studies*, 63 (2011), 362. See also Patrick Pollard, 'Wilde and the French', *English*, 53 (2004), 19-29.

¹⁴ The numbers in bracket refer to those of Counter's page references in Zola's *Paris*.

¹⁵ Counter, "One of Them", p. 362.

racism against Jews. Zola also highlights the Church's authoritarian hierarchy and its influence over naïve women such as Madame Duparque, and Geneviève's later conversion to strict Catholicism under the influence of her grandmother Madame Duparque. In *Le Docteur Pascal*, Martine, Pascal's maid, is portrayed as a woman who is 'enfoncee dans les croyances d'une religion étroite' (*Le Docteur Pascal*, p. 1381). In *Vérité* Zola projects the strict influence that priests have over women, as he does in *La Conquête de Plassans* with Faujas and Marthe Mouret. He associates in this novel, as well, the dangerous power of the Church with women's religious naiveté, or with 'les dévotes' as Férou tells Marc when comparing the priests' remuneration to that of the teachers in Maillebois (*Vérité*, p. 157). This is particularly true when Geneviève joins the Church out of religious naïveté. However, Geneviève is rebelling because Marc is too entrenched in his pursuit of Zéphirin's murderer and his secular ideologies. Nevertheless, the narrator implies that her return to Catholicism is also fuelled by her grandmother Madame Duparque's neurotic adoration for the Church which moulded her and Geneviève, to a 'long sevrage de l'Église' (p. 544) as is illustrated when Geneviève manages to stay away from Marc for a period of ten years. Here the narrator intensifies the Church's grip over women when referring to their sexual 'sevrage': 'L'Église le sait bien, elle ne conquiert pas la femme uniquement par la sensualité du culte, elle la fait sienne en la brutalisant, en la terrorisant, elle la traite en esclave habituée aux coups depuis des siècles, et qui a finit par goûter l'amère jouissance du sevrage' (p. 545). The narrator's comments on the strength of the Church's hold over women reflect those of Zola. Gould rightly argues that 'Zola links the persecution of women to something resembling the persecution of the Jews'.¹⁶ Indeed, Geneviève's departure to Madame Duparque and her 'conversion' to the Church are as topical as Simon's unfair treatment in this novel, see below. Gould further remarks that 'Zola's goal in linking women and the Jews as victims may be like that of Marc's effort to

¹⁶ Gould, *Dreyfus and the Literature of the Third Republic*, p. 70.

confront the development of passive anti-Semitic sentiments in public schools and in homes run by women' (p. 70).

In this novel, Zola encourages the emancipation of women. Ironically, although women manifested 'un détraquement nerveux' in the *Rougon-Macquart*, as shown in the previous chapters, in *Vérité* Zola attempts to give them their freedom and to remove them from their role as 'prostrated servant[s]' of the Church (Gould, p. 70). Ruth Harris argues that staunch republican men (as well as Zola) were indeed concerned with this problem since women who held anti-Semitic views sided with the Church during the Dreyfus Affair.¹⁷

With regard to how important the role of women was in this Affair, the anti-Dreyfusards supported the Church with anti-Semitic attacks in *Le Patriote Breton*. However, *La Fronde* supported Dreyfus; Jeanne Brémontier, the editor of *La Fronde*, who held republican and socialist views, questioned in her article whether Dreyfus was guilty: 'comment croire que Dreyfus ait pu émettre la prétension de priver le pays et l'histoire d'un document de cette importance? Est-ce-là ce qu'on appelle faire la lumière?'.¹⁸ In return, *Le Patriote Breton* responded on 13 September 1899 with a sarcastic anti-feminist comment: 'il est curieux de lire des journeaux dreyfusards, notamment ceux rédigés par des femmes'.¹⁹ The war between Dreyfusards and anti-Dreyfusards reverberated in the Parisian *salons* as well: Sybille Gabrielle Marie Antoinette de Martel de Janville, known as Gyp, an anti-Dreyfusard, was 'important within [her] coalition [...], in channelling the political emotion that the Affair has liberated' (Harris, p. 236). Indeed, Gyp was against Zola. In his preface to *Vérité*, Pacquot highlights Gyp's attacks on Zola for taking sides with Dreyfus. In Gyp's views, Zola was an outcast and represented 'le jolis tas d'ordures, le Génois, Zola-géronte, le grand vidangeur, Zola-la-débâcle'. She used Zola's ethnic origins to attack him because she believed he was also a

¹⁷ Ruth Harris, 'Two *Salonnières* during the Dreyfus Affair: The Marquise Visconti and Gyp', in *Confronting Modernity in Fin-de-Siècle France*, ed. by Forth and Accampo, pp. 235-250. See also Sowerwine 'Revising the Sexual Contract'.

¹⁸ Jeanne Brémontier, in 'Des femmes au secours du Capitaine Dreyfus' in <www.back.ac-rennes.fr/orient/egalchanc/fem3rep/FEMjourna.htm [accessed 2014].

¹⁹ Ibid.

'foreigner' and so sided with Dreyfus. If the anti-Dreyfusards wanted death for Dreyfus, they wanted the same for Zola: 'À mort Dreyfus! À mort Zola!' (Pacquot, preface to *Vérité*).

Returning to Zola's views on women's role in society and in their homes, he also strongly believes that 'la force du meilleur avenir est dans l'entente absolue du couple' as Marc reminds Thérèse (*Vérité*, p. 745) because this will create 'après la Famille enfantée, après la Cité fondée, la Nation se trouvait constituée [...] par l'instruction intégrale de tous les citoyens' (p. 749).

Zola condemns the Church's racist views and emphasizes its anti-Semitic stance towards the Jews as reflected by its attacks on Simon's teachings and its 'poisonous' effect on children's minds. Gould tells us that the '[Dreyfus] Affair's dramatic *peripetia* [Gould's emphasis] as well as Zola's portrait "Pour les juifs" are forcefully re-presented in Zola's *Vérité*'. Gould further remarks that in this novel 'the opposing attitudes of nationalists and intellectuals come to serve an effort to depict the "truth" of the nation in relation to the truth of that other nation – the one within the nation – France's Jews'; and that 'in response to the flattening effects of stereotyping wrought by racial profiles, Zola's novel demonstrates that the "truth" of the "Jews" lies in their intense heterogeneity and that the "truth" of France's intellectual speculators is that they are not all "Jews"' (p. 82). Indeed, Zola shows that it is the Jews who have an open mind as opposed to the narrowness of the Catholic Church. This is illustrated through Marc's comment about Simon, when the news of the murder of Zéphirin reaches him. In this passage Marc highlights Simon's good nature and liberal mind: 'Simon, je connais Simon! Il était à l'École normale avec moi [...]. Je ne sais pas de raison plus solide, de coeur plus tendre. Ce pauvre enfant, ce neveu catholique, il l'avait reçu, il le laissait chez les Frères, par un rare scrupule de confiance' (*Vérité*, p. 9). Yet, Marc is also momentarily part of the anti-Semitic faction since at the beginning of the novel he does not like Jews. This is illustrated on the one hand in Marc's stressing that Simon has a 'rare scrupule de confiance',

suggesting that Jews do not trust the Church, and on the other hand, in the narrator telling us that ‘Marc, [...] n’aimait pas les juifs, par une sorte de répugnance et de méfiance ataviques, dont il n’avait jamais eu la curiosité d’analyser les causes, malgré sa grande libération d’esprit’ (p. 21). However, the narrator insists that Marc did not search deep enough for the reasons that led him to dislike Jews, as the following phrases suggest: ‘il n’avait jamais eu la curiosité d’analyser les choses’, and ‘malgré sa grande libération d’esprit’. As Gould demonstrates, Marc is for the narrator naïve in his views about the Jews, but because Marc is ‘a Frenchman, certain assumptions about Jews are culturally inevitable it seems; they are learned unconsciously and become part of the operating system’ (Gould, p. 76). It is precisely because Marc belongs to that system that he is momentarily affected by these same attitudes, and Zola highlights, as Gould shows Marc’s moral gaps in his liberal thinking. But Marc is ‘redeemed’ so to speak by Zola: Marc also goes through a spiritual awakening of true Christian feelings for the Jews. Zola gives him the authority to investigate Zéphirin’s murder and find his rapist, whilst indirectly teaching him, through this process, how to appreciate other religions, in particular Judaism, by instilling in him, reason, logic, compassion, love, and humanity. In Part Two of this Chapter, I discuss Zéphirin’s murder further as it belongs as well to trauma or to the return of the phantom in Zola’s fiction.

Zola believed that France’s anti-Semitic criticisms belonged to a decadent and degenerative nature and that the Church was largely responsible. According to Jessica Rosalind Irons, Zola ‘saw catholicism as a stumbling block, a force against democracy and progress which must be destroyed if France were to survive’.²⁰ If for Zola ‘France was a decadent nation, then the Church was largely responsible for this situation’ (Irons, p. 112). For Zola, the Church represents ‘la puissance mauvaise, anti-sociale, stagnante et corruptrice’.²¹ Arguably, Zola’s radical and anticlerical attacks in this novel are aligned with those of eighteenth-century

²⁰ Irons, *Defying a Decadent Democracy*, p. 112.

²¹ Emile Zola, quoted in David Baguley, ‘Du récit polémique et du discours utopique: l’évangile républicain selon Zola’, *Cahiers Naturalistes*, 54 (1980), 112.

philosophers. When referring to the French legal, social, and sexual history of nineteenth-century Paris in his discussion of the period's laws regarding pederasty, Peniston also draws the reader's attention to the Enlightenment's radical thinkers against the Church.²² He argues that 'these anti-clerical writers including Voltaire and Mirabeau often used the issue [of pederasty] to satirize the clergy'. They believed that the 'all-male environment of the cloister encouraged this kind of behavior because the monks did not have an alternative outlet for their sexual energies' (p. 14).

La Conquête de Plassans is also a novel which underlines homosexuality between priests. We have seen in Chapter Three how Serge suffers from this 'teaching' and how Faujas's political interest in Marthe's religious naïveté draws Marthe and her family to perdition. Indeed, apart from representing anticlerical views in *Vérité*, the presence of greedy and sexually frustrated priests, such as l'Abbé Faujas in *La Conquête de Plassans* and Frère Archangias in *La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret*, returns in the last novel and is revived by the presence of Frères Gorgias, Philibin, Crabot, and Fulgence. As an example, the link between fictional priests and homosexuality is reinforced in *La Conquête de Plassans* through Monseigneur Rousselot's character who has a particular 'affection' for his 'secrétaire particulier, le joli abbé Surin' (*La Conquête de Plassans*, p. 987). Indeed, Monseigneur Rousselot is feminized. Faujas is surprised to find in him '[une] aisance toute féminine avec laquelle Mgr Rousselot changeait de maître et se livrait au plus fort' (p. 1020). This is further strengthened when the narrator tells us that 'l'évêque vivait là [...] en douairière' (p. 1015). He is keen on reading the poetry of Horace and Anacreon (pp. 1018-19). It is obvious that nineteenth-century readers would understand the pederastic connotations which Zola intended to highlight in referring to the ancient Roman and Greek lyric poetry of Horace and Anacreon: 'Mgr Rousselot [...] était une nature très fine, ayant pris le vice humain dans les livres' (p. 1019).

²² Peniston, *Pederasts and Others*, p. 14.

For Zola, these characters belong to the ‘diseased’ hereditary seeds of Marc/Zola’s environment, because they represent for the novelist the ‘ancien[s] dévora[t]eur[s] d’enfants’ as the narrator remarks when referring to Gorgias’s ‘passions monstrueuses’ (*Vérité*, p. 642). In *Vérité*, Zola condemns the Church for being decadent; he criticizes it for its failure to disclose the sexual abuse of young children by its priests, a failure that Père Philibin and Père Crabot are guilty of when Zéphirin is raped and murdered by Gorgias.

For Zola, priests’ dirty activities are represented as ‘crépusculaire[s]’ and ‘empuanti[e]s’ as discharged by the Church’s ‘eaux ménagères’ (p. 4). In this passage, ‘crépusculaire’ functions as a synonym for ‘ténébreux’ or ‘shadowy’. We could argue that Zola’s intention was to use the word ‘crépusculaire’ to highlight the secretive nature of those priests. Zola might have had the idea of lending Philibin, Crabot, and Gorgias ‘quelques ténébreux projets’ in molesting young children in the planning of this novel to highlight his anticlerical views and to stress those priests’ machinations for hiding the abuse of young children. Indeed, the narrator implies that Philibin’s and Crabot’s secret relating to Gorgias’s crime is ‘crépusculaire’ or ‘ténébreux’. Zola also attacks the Church for not speaking the truth in its religious teaching. Indeed, Zola manifests repugnance for the clerics who govern the Catholic schools and who teach young children false truth in indoctrinating their young minds with superstitions. Below I show how this is transmitted in this novel. Marc, who functions as Zola’s spokesman, is the one who brings to the surface the depravity of human nature in speaking out the truth.

Although measures to secularize education were meant to reinforce state neutrality towards religion, hostility towards the Church was often explicit. ‘Nothing’, as Denis Brogan remarks, ‘could exceed the rigorous orthodoxy of Republican agnosticism’.²³ Indeed, Zola’s hatred of the Catholic clerics and his wish to reveal the truth in supporting secular teaching is voiced by Marc. This is illustrated when the narrator reflects Marc’s thoughts when he accepts

²³ D. W. Brogan, *The French Nation 1814-1940* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1957), p. 173.

Salvan's request to take up a post in Maillebois: 'C'était sa mission qui tout d'un coup [...] précisait, son apostolat de la vérité'. Priests are victims of Zola's scorn in this novel. Yet, through Marc's views, Zola highlights his 'tolérance, très juste par crainte de céder à sa passion de penseur libre, libéré de tous les dogmes' (*Vérité*, p. 40). We have seen in Chapter Three and above how this is represented in Faujas in *La Conquête de Plassans* and in Archangias in *La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret*, and how their respective political and religious machinations and their hatred against women succeeded in destroying families as well as Serge's mental capacities.

Marc suspects that Gorgias is a pederast, as he tells Delbos when passing on his suspicions: 'D'autre part, il a eu jadis, m'a-t'on raconté, des rapports avec le père Philibin et le père Crabot lui-même...Le frère Gorgias' (p. 128). Philibin and Crabot unite to protect Gorgias since they fear that he might expose their active homosexuality (p. 132). However, these accusations are, as Delbos advises, only speculations. Regarding the priests' sexual behaviour, the narrator keeps his distance through Delbos' hypotheses. Zola does the same when he deals with Marc: when his narrator tells the reader that 'Marc n'aimait pas les juifs', the reader senses that it is his character who thinks so and that his view does not coalesce with that of the author. Indeed, Pierre Cogny has highlighted the dangers of identifying the novelist's views with those of any characters in a novel.²⁴ Zola, in *Vérité*, distances himself from anti-Semitic accusations yet uses his character, Marc, to echo the general feeling towards Jews. This is illustrated when Marc with sarcasm voices the anti-Dreyfusards' (anti-Simonists' in this novel) views about the Jews after he and his friend David (Simon's brother) fail to receive support from le baron Nathan, a Jew himself: "'Mort aux juifs!" cria Marc en se moquant' (p. 105). In this scene, Zola is not in support of this anti-Semitic attack, but reflects through Marc's and David's cynicism the racial prejudice from which Maillebois society and its inhabitants suffer "'Ah! Le sale juif!" dit David du même ton d'amère plaisanterie' (p. 105).

²⁴ Pierre Cogny, 'Le Discours de Zola sur la Commune: étude d'un problème de réception', *Cahiers Naturalistes*, 54 (1980), 19.

Zola chooses to keep a neutral stance by distancing himself from his protagonist's views whilst indirectly attacking the Church and the anti-Dreyfusards. Zola is disillusioned with a Christianity that does not seem to heal or redeem the world, as the narrow-minded Maillebois society pretends it does. The novel highlights this opposition since it shows that through the voice of the narrator Zola does not refute Christian values but its institutionalized machinations, and prefers to distance himself given the accusations made against him at his trial and condemnation.²⁵

Returning to the anticlerical theme that this novel contains, although Marc hates priests he holds some sympathy for l'Abbé Quandieu who is described as 'grand et robuste, mais de visage doux et bon. Marc éprouvait pour celui-ci une certaine estime, le sachant tolérant, d'un esprit raisonnable' (p. 31). In contrast to Quandieu, Théodose is represented as a 'confesseur réputé, un orateur mystique dont la voix chaude faisait accourir les dévotes'. Zola hated this type of priest because for him they represent 'les pervertisseurs, les empoisonneurs de la laïque' as the revolutionary Férou remarks (pp. 33, 35). Indeed, the French Catholic Church disliked the Republic and used every possible means to discredit it (p. 270). Gould shows how Zola reassessed his moral convictions on the civic question posed by the Dreyfus Affair; she observes that Zola offered fictive articulations in response to the role of secularism and public education as well as to the tolerance of Jews.²⁶ Férou evokes Zola's views on the clerics' hypocrisy and ignorance of true religious duties. In the same passage which condemns the priests of Maillebois, l'Abbé Cognasse is also represented as mean, depraved, bigoted, and prejudiced. Zola's dislike for this type is highlighted in Férou's observations:

L'abbé Cognasse, quand il vient dire sa messe, cracherait sur moi s'il me rencontrait. Et c'est parce-que j'ai refusé de chanter au lutrin et de sonner la cloche que je n'ai pas de pain tous les jours. [...] et il vous dévorerait, si vous le laissiez faire ... Un instituteur, mais c'est la bête de somme, [...], le monsieur raté dont les paysans se défient et que les curés brûleraient, pour installer sur le pays encore l'unique règne du catéchisme ! (*Vérité*, p. 34)

²⁵ Zola escaped to England for fear of imminent arrest in 1898.

²⁶ Gould, *Dreyfus and the Literature of the Third Republic*, p. 56

Through Marc's views, Zola's aversion to religious greediness is also emphasized: the narrator's *discours indirect* reflects Marc and Zola's thoughts in highlighting the unfair difference between the salary of secular teachers and that of priests:

Mais surtout, la comparaison [...] lui était désastreuse: l'instituteur si mal payé, si misérable, souffrant de l'irrespect des élèves et du dédain des parents, [...] sans autorité véritable; le curé, rétribué beaucoup plus grassement, ayant en dehors du casuel l'aubaine de toutes sortes de cadeaux, soutenu par son évêque, choyé par les dévotes, parlant au nom d'un maître farouche, maître de la foudre, de la pluie et du soleil. (*Vérité*, p. 157)

Zola's tirades against Catholic priests are also illustrated in the thoughts of his character Mademoiselle Rouzaire, the religious teacher who believes that she, as a lay person, has no right unlike the priests, to inspect Zéphirin's room after his murder. Zola's sarcasm is strengthened through Mademoiselle Rouzaire's naïve beliefs: 'Ce que pouvaient se permettre les ministres de Dieu n'étaient peut-être pas sain pour des simples instituteurs' (p. 14). Indeed, for Zola, the Church 'empoisonne [...] l'opinion publique' and holds 'de tels triomphes des superstitions les plus basses' as Quandieu realizes when he is saddened by the war that is raging between the religious and secular schools. Quandieu feels that this war and the Capuchin priests' insular attitudes towards religion would be the death of Christianity and would demolish the true teachings of Christ. Quandieu is 'desolé de voir sa paroisse désertée et appauvrie, [...] qu'on achevât de tuer son doux Seigneur, son Dieu de charité et d'amour, en en faisant le Dieu du mensonge et de l'iniquité' (p. 133). Zola is not against religion, he is against the Catholic priests' superstitious views and their power to prey on innocent children (and on women), poisoning their minds with ignorance rather than enabling them to think for themselves with logic and reason. Clélia Anfray believes that Zola does not pretend to be religious. For her, 'Zola ne refuse pas Dieu, il ne refuse pas non plus la lecture de la Bible'.²⁷ Indeed, in *Vérité* Zola is true to his understanding of Christianity; in this novel he obliquely reinforces the Bible's Ninth Commandment in order to remind the reader that one 'should not

²⁷ Clélia Anfray, 'Zola à l'épreuve de la théologie: lecture de Renan' <http://études-romantiques.ish-lyon.cnrs.fr/wa_files/CleliaAnfray.pdf> [accessed May 2014].

bear false witness against [one's] neighbour'.²⁸ The priests' hypocritical beliefs in Christian teaching, in this novel, are objectionable to Zola and hence their shadowy behaviour, with its ability to affect women and children, is represented by images of dirt and disease. For example, Madame Duparque releases her 'foyer de contagion mystique' to other women and mostly to Marc's wife Geneviève. For David Baguley, Geneviève represents 'la République que le héros doit sauver du venin qui l'empoisonne'.²⁹ It is true that Geneviève has been contaminated by the Church, but it is not Marc who saves her, it is Louise, their daughter, who does so. Zola is keen to show that the Church's doctrines have 'afflicted' Geneviève so much that she has lost her mind over her religion. However, Geneviève is strong and independent; she manages to stay away from Marc for ten years. Her character is necessary to heighten the Church's influence over women whom Zola represents as naïve and weak of mind. Once again Zola is keen to associate women's allegiance to the Church with madness; indeed for the novelist, Geneviève, like other women characters in the *Rougon-Macquart* novels, also inherits their ancestral 'fêlure'. However, in this case, Geneviève *adopts* her grandmother's fanatical religious mysticism as opposed to the sexual 'détraquement' of the Rougon-Macquart female family members because Marc is too involved with his own secular beliefs. Gilbert Chaitin remarks that Marc's marital failure is the result of Geneviève's adherence to the Church, but also of her inheritance: 'la tâche ancienne [...] qui joue le rôle du revenant; l'élément gothique qui manifeste le retour d'un passé ténébreux'.³⁰ The phantom that permeated the *Rougon-Macquart* novels and haunted their creator makes itself present also in this novel. I show below how this functions.

²⁸ Bible, Exodus 20:16 (Revised Standard Version) (Glasgow: Collins, 1934), p. 65.

²⁹ Baguley, 'Du récit polémique au discours utopique', p. 109.

³⁰ Gilbert D. Chaitin, 'Le Cauchemar de la Vérité, ou le rêve du revenant', *Cahiers Naturalistes*, 82 (2008), 194.

Part 2 The Presence of Personal Trauma through the Narrator's Discourse

This part reinforces the return of the 'phantom' as it draws a parallel between the way in which Zola's 'secret' is delivered and Derrida's understanding of how the spectre is invoked.³¹ It suggests that the fictionalized rape of Zéphirin functions as textual evidence of the presence of personal trauma in this novel. I return to Abraham and Torok's theory of the phantom since it also functions in *Vérité* as an unspeakable trauma which is transmitted through the repetitive process of 'symptoms formation' in the narrative. In other words, Abraham and Torok see the secret of 'our ancestors' saga' as 'undisclosed trauma of previous generation'. As demonstrated in the previous chapters, I see this process forming in the texts under consideration through the method of writing.³²

Zola's sexual anxieties as proposed in Chapter One and as projected in the selected texts return to haunt him in the form of trauma in this novel; I highlighted in Part One that Zola's political and religious anxieties were linked to national trauma. Arguably, *Vérité* speaks the unspeakable on two fronts: as an allegory of the Dreyfus Affair and its condemnation of a hypocritical and anti-Semitic society, and as recollection of personal trauma. In this novel, Zola also deals with a taboo by revealing the rape and murder of a child, and thus confronts the unspeakable.

Zola's decision to include, in his last novel, a child's rape and murder is not to be taken lightly and thus merits an investigation. This topic has not been examined in depth by critics, perhaps because of a paucity of documented evidence on this subject. Nevertheless, since there is mention of child's sexual abuse in this novel, we can argue that there is some indication to suggest that Zéphirin's 'rape' could represent the novelist's sexual anxiety with regard to the sexual act (see Chapter One, section 2). However, since we have no available proof to argue that this actually happened, it is important to understand that the following

³¹ In respect of Derrida's theory see Chapter One, Part Three.

³² Abraham and Torok, *The Shell and the Kernel*.

discussion on the possible connection between Zéphirin's rape and personal trauma is based on a hypothesis based on the reading of particular passages in the novel.

There are nonetheless, critics who have approached this topic. Hannah Thompson, for example, argues that *Vérité* is a veiled account of the Dreyfus Affair; she juxtaposes the national trauma which the Affair caused to Zola with the personal trauma and remarks that 'we might even go so far as to suggest that Zola re-enacts his sexual assault when representing the rape of Zéphirin'.³³ For Thompson, *Vérité* speaks the 'unspeakable'.³⁴ She argues for the importance of Zola's 'decision to include a child rape in his novel' and relates it to 'another taboo which haunted Zola's existence' (p. 131). She remarks that Zola's biographers have 'suggested with the sketchiest of details, that, as a child, Zola was sexually abused, perhaps raped, by an adolescent servant boy'.³⁵ Thompson questions 'if Zéphirin's rape works as evidence of the presence of an original trauma' (p. 131). Thompson further observes that 'Zola's description of Zéphirin's death can be read as a reflexive commentary on the novelist's attempt to speak the unspeakable and to make the unknown known' (p. 132). Yet, Thompson argues that 'the nature of Zéphirin's death by strangulation [...] cannot be fully spoken in the text and is only alluded to' (p. 133). However, for Henri Mitterand, Zola did not suffer the 'moindre traumatisme' and believes it to be 'une anecdote banale'.³⁶ Gilbert Chaitin believes that Zola was reluctant to acknowledge the subject of paedophilia and argues that Zola saw this as '[un fait] secondaire' in his *Ébauche*.³⁷ He examines Zola's *cauchemar* in relation to the Dreyfus Affair and believes that this novel can be read as a precursor to detective novels, since for him, 'il appartient au Roman policier'. Frederic Brown, nevertheless, insists that 'Zola's genital sensations have always had enormous repercussions in his psychic life'.³⁸ Karl Rosen

³³ Thompson, *Taboo*, pp. 131-32.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 131-32.

³⁵ See Mitterand, *Zola*, I, 93.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

³⁷ Gilbert Chaitin, 'Transposing the Dreyfus Affair: The Trauma of Identity in Zola's *Vérité*', *Australian Journal of French Studies*, 38.3 (2001), 430-44 (430).

³⁸ Frederick Brown, *Zola: A Life* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1995), p. 8.

also sees the novel as the ‘Dreyfus Affair put into fiction’, but represents it as well as ‘the incident of Zola’s youth carried to the extreme – not just violation, but murder as well’.³⁹ Although Karl Rosen believes that the ‘crime against Zéphirin is the peg on which Zola could hang his bitter denunciation of the Catholic Church’, he also equates ‘pederasty against a boy with a rape’ (Rosen, p. 112). Rosen also remarks that ‘it was the extremity of Gorgias’s crime that Zola focused upon’. Odile Hansen has also made allusion to the novelist’s rape in his youth. I have examined Hansens’s argument in Chapter One.⁴⁰

Since Zola makes allusion to child sexual abuse and uses the rape and murder of Zéphirin as a major theme in this novel, it is not possible to ignore its other relevance in the text; indeed, this text also offers an opportunity to analyse its meaning behind the textual representation of the crime. I investigate in this part to what extent Zola provides information to Marc which the reader is not given. I suggest that Marc, as Zola’s spokesman, speaks the truth about national and personal trauma in *Vérité*. Through him the novelist speaks the unspeakable in confronting his ‘phantom’; in other words, Zola exposes the taboo of child’s sexual abuse whilst distancing himself from it.

2.1 Zola’s Thruth

The description of the body of a raped and strangled child points to the unconscious, if we assume that Zola sexual assault occurred. Nevertheless, Zola might have also read of similar crimes in the press or attended trials or seen police reports in order to describe this scene. Indeed, Peniston highlights frequent cases of child sexual assault that appeared in newspapers and examines police ledgers which held such cases in the nineteenth century, and remarks that child molestation and sexual abuse were frequent during that period.⁴¹ It is thus also possible that Zola had in mind such cases and used Zéphirin as one example. Whilst I have

³⁹ Karl Rosen, ‘Emile Zola and Homosexuality’, *Excavatio*, 2 (1995), 112-13.

⁴⁰ See Chapter One, note 61.

⁴¹ Peniston, *Pederasts and Others*, pp. 49, 79, 91 and 92.

carefully considered the novel's outcry against anti-Semitism and anticlericalism, I also propose that *Vérité* can be read as 'a fictionalized repetition of Zola's own childhood experience' (Thompson, *Taboo*, p. 131) because this argument sustains the psychoanalytical approach taken in this work with regard to sexual anxiety. Zola's decision to transpose the Affair is significant 'since it establishes a parallel between the national trauma of betrayal [...] and the personal trauma of the loss of a child through rape and murder' (Thompson, p. 131). In so doing the reader can delineate, so to speak, the 'outline' of the phantom which returns to haunt a depraved society which Marc belongs to and is part of.

Thompson conceives *Vérité* as a symbol for the 'fictional [...] repetition of history' (p. 126). She uses Cathy Caruth's trauma theory who, in turn, relates it to Freud's definition of trauma in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*.⁴² For Caruth, Freud understands trauma 'as a wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind [...] – the breach in the mind's experience of time, self and the world – [...] an event that is experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known and is therefore not available to consciousness *until it imposes itself again*, repeatedly, in the nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor' (pp. 7-8, my emphasis). Although Thompson is right to refer to Caruth's and Freud's understanding and definition of trauma as representing compulsive repetitive actions of a given society or its member,⁴³ I see the 'repetition' of trauma in the representation of Zéphirin's rape and murder as belonging to Abraham and Torok's theory of the phantom passing on unspeakable secrets to other generations, which, in this novel, the phantom is made to speak.⁴⁴

Zola's fiction underlines some trauma related to sexuality which at times is veiled under a plethora of masculine 'invincibility' against female sexuality as we have seen in the previous chapters. I highlighted this excess as demonstrated by the narrator's discourse over women in

⁴² Cathy Caruth, 'Introduction', in *Trauma: Exploration in Memory* (Baltimore, MD, and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), pp. 3-12.

⁴³ Sigmund Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, trans. by Katherine Jones (New York: Vintage, 1939), p. 84. Freud strengthens the fact that disastrous events, such as war, can lead to 'traumatic neuroses'.

⁴⁴ Abraham and Torok, *The Shell and the Kernel*.

Chapter Four when I made allusion to the novelist's sexual insecurity and his attempt to contain his female protagonists in order to control, enjoy and tame their sexuality. In *Vérité*, we could argue that there exists a parallel between the telling and untelling. Admittedly, because of the trauma that this action might have caused and because of its taboo subject, we could argue that Zola gives the narrator the authority of imparting information to Marc, who in turn passes it on to us through his investigations of the rape and murder of Zéphirin. But Marc's character does not function simply as the narrator's *porte-parole*, his character is also necessary, indeed is crucial, to help confront the phantom that lies within the fringes of the narrative's (sexual) trauma.

2.2 Zola's Crypt

Derrida's interest in secrecy revolves around the need 'to listen to the spectre, to speak with the spectre, [but] most of all to let the spectre speak'.⁴⁵ In this chapter I let the spectre speak. I show that the secret is voiced through the narrator who in turn passes it onto Marc whose role is to provide the reader with information.

In my previous analyses, we saw how Zola uses his narrator to both describe and react to his characters' actions, particularly when related to female sexuality. In Chapter Five we saw how Pascal's character could be read as an image of the author. In his last novel, Marc, as Zola's spokesman, is invaluable to him; he echoes the novelist's thoughts in the search for truth. The author entrusts Marc to investigate Zéphirin's 'rape' and murder. Zola's mission, as is that of Marc, is to reconcile his affects through logic and reason by facing his fears and searching for the truth. In order to show that *Vérité* functions as catharsis, some important passages in *Thérèse Raquin* are re-examined in this section and are juxtaposed with passages which reflect the return of the repressed in this novel.

⁴⁵ See Chapter One, note 71.

The secrets which I argued were represented in Marie in *La Fortune des Rougon* and in *Thérèse Raquin* were concealed in the family tree in *Le Docteur Pascal*, and exposed in Marie's return through Clotilde. In this novel, Pascal was anxious about both exposing the family's secret and inheriting its diseased genes: he feared that if he inherited the family disease he would experience 'la douleur de voir la tare renaître en ses moelles, roulerait-il à l'épouvante de se sentir aux griffes du monstre héréditaire?' (*Le Docteur Pascal*, p. 1033). We could argue that *Vérité* is also a narrative which plays on the human consciousness in highlighting a horrible crime, because this novel reveals the other secret which Pascal omitted to tell Clotilde: arguably, the story of a sexually assaulted and murdered child. Marc, as the representative of the author to condemn a decadent society as shown above, is the best qualified to do this since throughout the novel he is the one who probes and brings to the surface the depravity of his society in facing the trauma which Zéphirin's rape and murder produced and which disturbed him. I wish to examine some passages which relate to Zéphirin's sexual assault and murder and connect them later to those already examined in *Thérèse Raquin*. This will support the theory of the phantom that prevails in Zola's fiction and on which this project bases itself.

2.3 The Spectre of Things Past

In Chapter One, I argued that there was a mystery which permeated the texts under consideration and demonstrated that it was related to trauma, which in turn was connected to sexuality, mainly female sexuality. My analysis of *Vérité* further confirms the presence of trauma in Zola's fiction. Below are three passages taken from *Vérité* which reinforce the theory of the phantom; they relate to Marc's feelings about Zéphirin's aggressor and killer:

Seul, Marc gardait une *incertitude*, un *malaise*. Bien que, le premier, il eût conçu cette idée d'un inconnu se ruant sur Zéphirin. [...] N'était-il pas plus admissible que *l'homme connaissait* l'enfant et qu'il avait causé d'abord, le cajolant, le rassurant ? Puis la brusque et abominable tentation devait être venue, et la ruée folle, et les cris étouffés, et le viol, et le meurtre, dans *l'épouvante*. Mais cela était si *confus*, que Marc, après

avoir eu comme une *intuition* rapide, était retombé aux *ténèbres*, aux débats anxieux [...]. Il se contenta de dire à Simon, pour achever de le calmer:

— Tous les témoignages concordent, la vérité se fera vite. (*Vérité*, p. 24, my emphases)

Une plainte rauque lui [Gorgias] avait échappé, et Marc frémit, tant le vieil homme ravagé de passions monstrueuses, l'ancien dévorateur d'enfants, avait mis de tendresses ardentes dans sa voix cassée, en parlant de Polydore. D'ailleurs, il n'eut pas le temps de s'attarder à cet enfer entrevu, le défroqué continuait, en se rapprochant violemment de lui. (*Vérité*, pp. 641-42)

Il eut conscience de ce regard attaché sur lui qui le fouillait profondément. [...] Mais le frère Gorgias ne parla pas tout de suite, le silence recommença. [...] et de grands coups de vent hurlaient dans les rues désertes; tandis que la flamme de la petite lampe, immobile et droite, filait un peu, au milieu des vagues ombres de la salle endormie. Peu à peu, pris de malaise, souffrant de tout ce que la présence de cet homme éveillait en lui de trouble et d'abominable, Marc avait tourné un regard inquiet vers la porte, où il savait que Geneviève devrait être restée. Entendait-elle ? [E]t quel malaise aussi pour elle que toute *cette boue ancienne ainsi remuée!* (*Vérité*, pp. 632, 642-43, my emphasis)

These passages are linked to the return of the phantom; in these passages, Zola is giving Marc the authority to speak with the 'spectre'. In the first one, when Marc is reflecting upon the assault and when he is facing Gorgias, the phantom's presence is made evident through the vocabulary used by the narrator to reflect Marc's suspicions, thoughts, and fears: for example, the words and phrases such as 'seul', 'connaissait', 'l'homme', 'confus', 'intuition', 'eut conscience', 'certitude', 'malaise', 'inconnu', 'épouvante', 'ténébreux' reinforce Abraham's theory of the phantom which he argues is transmitted through an undisclosed trauma. Indeed, the word 'malaise' is, in these passages repeated three times. Since Marc finds this feeling strange, the 'malaise' which he feels and which he attributes to an 'inconnu épisode' is for him, 'ténébreux', but important to this analysis. The words 'ténébreux' and 'confus' strengthen the sensation of *déjà vu*, or the return of the repressed, and suggest that through the protagonist's sensorial memory, Marc/Zola is confronting the 'unspeakable' or the taboo. This is illustrated when he is challenged by Gorgias. It appears that this scene is familiar to Marc, as suggested by the words 'malaise' and 'confus'. The feeling of *déjà vu* helps him face the phantom or the unspeakable through the challenge posed by Gorgias's presence because it

gives Marc a 'malaise' and uneasiness, provoking in him 'des vagues ombres'. Marc is indeed frightened since he is haunted by the 'mains adroites et invisibles' of the perpetrator.

Nevertheless, Marc feels that Gorgias's crime towards Zéphirin needs to be revealed otherwise Père Philibin and Père Crabot will continue to protect paedophile priests. We should remember that Gorgias continued to haunt Marc even in his later life as a great-grandfather (p. 642). Indeed, Rose, Marc's great granddaughter is nearly raped. Zola is skilful at indicating to the reader that 'chez l'enfant les impressions premières sont les plus vives et les plus tenaces', as the narrator tells us (*Vérité*, p. 293). However, if Marc's mission is to investigate Zéphirin's murder, why should he be frightened of Gorgias even if he knows he is the abuser and murderer? I suggest that Zola has given Marc a privileged task, that of facing the culprit, because through him Zola deals with the taboo in transferring these feelings to his protagonist. For Zola, Marc is the hero because he faces Gorgias and makes him confess his crime. It is a fact that Gorgias belongs to the 'anciens dévor[at]eurs d'enfants' or child predators, as the narrator refers to them when alluding to Père Philibin and Père Crabot. Indeed, for Marc, they aid and abet crimes committed by Gorgias, 'il répondait aux Frères défailants' (p. 349). For Zola, these priests are weak and deficient in their duties to look after children, as 'défailants' suggests. The reference to paedophile priests is further implied when the narrator refers to the murder of the grandson of the old comtesse de Quedeville, Gaston, whose assault and murder is unstated in this novel, but alluded to by the following sentence: 'ce qui induisait à soupçonner l'existence de quelque cadavre'. Indeed, Gorgias and presumably his fellow priests are from the narrator's point of view 'hanté [s] de lubricité et de violence' (p. 346).

As is the case with *La Fortune des Rougon*, *Thérèse Raquin* and *Le Docteur Pascal*, the secret has a haunting effect on the narrator in *Vérité* too. If Zola's was assaulted as hypothesized (see above), this is at best covertly revealed in this novel; this is primarily illustrated through the description of the rape and murder of Zéphirin, and secondly through the presence of some characters who remind us of characters from earlier novels. I examine

below some passages in *Thérèse Raquin* since they reinforce, in our discussion of this novel, the links made within the series; they open the road to understanding why Zola chose his last work to recount the story of Zéphirin's crime:

Dès l'entrée du passage il [Laurent] éprouva des voluptés cuisantes. [...] il monta l'escalier étroit et obscur, en s'appuyant aux murs gras d'humidité. [...] au bruit de chaque heurt, il sentait une brûlure qui lui traversait la poitrine. (*Thérèse Raquin* p. 72)

Ce passage a trente pas de long et deux de large, au plus: il est pavé de dalles jaunâtres, usées, descellées, suant toujours une humidité âcre. Le vitrage qui le couvre, coupé à angle droit, est noir de crasse. (*Thérèse Raquin* p. 31)

L'étroite chambre, [...] gardait son calme, son air d'enfance heureuse. [...] Le petit lit blanc n'était pas même défait, l'enfant ne s'était pas couché [...]. Et là, sur la descente du lit, le pauvre petit corps de Zéphirin gisait, en chemise, étranglé, la face livide, le cou nu, portant les marques des abominables doigts de l'assassin. La chemise souillée, arrachée, à demi fendue, laissait voir les maigres jambes *écartées violemment*, dans une posture qui ne permettait aucun doute sur l'immonde attentat; et l'échine déviée apparaissait, elle aussi, la pauvre bosse que le bras gauche, rejeté par-dessus la tête, faisait saillir. (*Vérité*, p. 12, my emphasis)

Arguably, if *Vérité* reveals the secret, *Thérèse Raquin* suggests how it happened; the passages from *Thérèse Raquin* are connected to the one from *Vérité* in so far as they act as signifiers reflecting, through their signs, a traumatic experience. Jacques Lacan argues that:

[L]e conscient est formé de représentations de mots, de phonèmes et de choses [...], le signe linguistique se définit donc comme une entité à deux faces: signifiant, signifié [...]. Ce signifié est le fait d'écrire dans le souvenir. [...] Chaque signifié (Se) est lui-même le signifiant (Sa) d'un autre signifié (Se). Le souvenir qui émerge: (Sa). Il renvoie à un second souvenir, le Se, qui lui-même, puisqu'il renvoie à un autre souvenir, devient Sa.⁴⁶

The passage from *Thérèse Raquin* contains the signified and the signifier in that, through them, the memory of the assault is reflected, even though Thérèse and Laurent's act does not signify rape in that novel. Yet, for Zola and for the narrator of *Vérité*, Zéphirin's assault and murder is considered as 'un attentat immonde'. This is retrospectively represented in *Thérèse Raquin* as an act of sexual abuse euphemistically illustrated however by the repetition: 'attentat immonde'. The assault on a child who suffered sexual abuse and whose legs have been

⁴⁶ Jacques Lacan, 'Langage et inconscient', quoted in *Formation pour infirmière de secteur psychiatrique: cours et schémas présentés par D. Giffard*, in <<http://psychiatriinfirmiere.free.fr>> [accessed May 2012].

'écartées violemment' is represented through the word 'entrée' in *Thérèse Raquin* and suggests penetration. This assault is then felt as 'brûlures [...] cuisantes' through the 'heurt' which Laurent feels. Laurent's eagerness to have sex reflects as well an abuse of trust and a violation of the right to life of an innocent through Thérèse's betrayal and abuse of her husband, Camille, and his murder and the murder of her unborn child as well. This comparison links this scene to Zéphirin's assault and murder since it affects the narrator of *Vérité*; it sits in the unconscious but is mirrored through semantic signs or through the 'signe linguistique' that Zola's fiction conveys. For my part, I see this as representing as well, the phantom of things past which returns in this novel.

The first example which highlights the memory of the crime that is linked to *Thérèse Raquin* is represented through the 'signifié (Se)', or the signifier; this is illustrated in the description of Zéphirin's room and his contorted body. Zéphirin's 'chemise souillée' and his 'jambes écartées violemment' act as the 'signifié': this reverberates in, and is (retrospectively) linked to, the sexual act between Laurent and Thérèse, through the phrases 'voluptés cuisante' and 'brûlure' as shown above. These phrases function as the 'signifiant (Sa)'. The euphemism of the phrase 'brûlure cuisante' indicates that pain occurred. Although the narrator in *Thérèse Raquin* indicates Laurent's sensual pleasure by using these words, he nonetheless reflects the 'repercussions' of a painful experience through the words 'heurt' 'brûlure' and 'cuisante' which act as signifiers of a traumatic experience. Zéphirin must have also felt '[une] brûlure cuisante' since 'l'acte fut silencieux et brutal' as the narrator states in *Thérèse Raquin* (p. 72).

With regard to the return of the phantom, which makes itself present in *Vérité*, I suggested in Chapter Four that there might be counter-transference at play between Renée and the narrator when I described her room at the Hotel Béraud after she has been 'defeated' by Maxime and Saccard and goes back home to face her death (Chapter Four, Section 2.2) The passage below shows to what extent the phantom of an unspeakable trauma haunts Renée as well:

Puis elle monta le grand escalier *silencieux*, elle aperçut son père au fond de l'enfilade des vastes pièces; [...] il s'enfonçait lentement dans l'ombre de la vieille demeure, [...] elle trouva [...] *une grosse clef rouillée* ou les *araignées* avaient filé leur toile. *La serrure jeta un cri plaintif* [...]. Elle referma la porte de la volière laissée ouverte [...] avec la *vague idée* que c'était par cette porte *que s'étaient envolées les joies de son enfance*. (*La Curée*, p. 597, my emphasis)

Renée returns to her old room and experiences 'une tristesse vague' when she opens the door with 'une grosse clef rouillée' to find that the lock utters a figurative cry of pain. Through the sad tone of the description of Zéphirin's body, the narrator also feels 'une tristesse vague' whilst describing to the reader the child's murder and the room in which the crime took place. Furthermore, the adjective 'étroit' in the passage from *La Curée* is also present in the description of Le Passage du Pont-Neuf. Zéphirin's room is also 'étroite'. Renée's room has windows which are 'étroites' and have 'des hautes fenêtres, garnies d'énormes barres de fer' (*La Curée*, p. 399). The 'phantom' is exposed in these passages by the repetitions of the signifier 'étroit' and the signified 'barres'.⁴⁷ Bars suggest narrow and enclosed spaces, the crypt so to speak. Indeed, Laurent feels 'des voluptés cuisantes' when he enters the narrow passage, Renée feels 'une tristesse vague' when she opens the door with 'une clef rouillée' and Zéphirin is found with his 'jambes écartées et chemise souillée de sang' in his 'étroite chambre'. Whilst these descriptions may not mean much individually, together they suggest a repetition of an association of pain within confined spaces, or the return of the repressed through the representation of words which suggest trauma through memory.⁴⁸ Zola highlights in this novel the loss of childhood innocence in the abstract presentation of Renée's sad thoughts: 'Elle referma la porte avec la vague idée que c'était par cette porte que s'étaient envolées les joies de son enfance' (*La Curée*, p. 597).

Furthermore, the figurative sound that Renée's old doll emits 'elle retrouva une de ses anciennes poupées; tout le son avait coulé par un trou' (*La Curée*, p. 598), resonates in *Vérité*, and is retrospectively linked to Zéphirin: the dying sound that the doll utters from its old

⁴⁷ See Cathy Caruth, *Trauma: Exploration in Memory*.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

broken hole in *La Curée* represents the sound that Zéphirin would have uttered had he not been gagged by Gorgias, 'il est bien certain que le meurtrier a essayé d'enfoncer ce tampon dans la bouche de l'enfant pour étouffer ses cris', as Père Philibin exclaims (*Vérité*, p. 15). With regard to the sound of Renée's doll, I am assuming that Zola was referring to it because such porcelain dolls which emit sound were available at that period.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, Maryse Adam-Maillet sees the function of the doll as a representation of Renée herself.⁵⁰ She argues that Zola wanted to highlight Renée's comparison to a doll as 'une poupée humaine servant de jouet d'enfant' (p. 51). She further develops her argument in suggesting that for Zola 'rien n'empêche d'ajouter au tableau sadique finale [of Renée] une touche définitivement sinistre'. For Zola, she argues, Renée represents 'la poupée décapitée', la colonne du Second Empire'; for Adam-Maillet, Renée is used by the novelist as 'un accessoire sado-masochiste' to satisfy his sadistic attacks against her sexuality and against a corrupt Second Empire; Renée is for Zola the 'cible privilégiée à la démonstration mythico-idéologique zolienne' (p. 51).

2.4 Catharsis and *Vérité*

It is through Marc's reaction to Frère Gorgias, and his relationship with him, as illustrated in the previous sections, that the 'return of the repressed' is arguably apparent in this novel. I suggest that in the scene where the body is found, Zola (as the invisible witness) is present through the voice of Marc, who in turn suspects all along that Gorgias is the perpetrator and the criminal, as he asserts to Delbos: 'Mais il n'y a pas de doute pour moi, c'est un Frère qui est le violeur et l'assassin!' (p. 125). Marc's convictions result from the intense interest that he pays to the case since he believes that the piece of paper found in Zéphirin's mouth has the convent school's imprint on it. Marc is convinced of Gorgias's crime, but Delbos's arguments as a lawyer are presented as reasonable and logical evidence which can dismiss Gorgias as the

⁴⁹ <<http://www.poupendol.com/speakingdolls.html>> [accessed July 2013].

⁵⁰ Maryse Adam-Maillet, 'Renée, poupée dans *La Curée*', in *Cahiers Naturalistes*, 69 (1995), 49-68.

rapist and murderer; they do not satisfy Marc, who despairs that Gorgias will not be unmasked:

Mais ces preuves, de simple logique et de raisonnement, ne pouvaient suffire, Marc en convenait volontiers; et il se désespérait d'avoir mené ses recherches au milieu d'une telle obscurité, d'une confusion et d'une terreur que des mains adroites et invisibles semblaient prendre à tâche d'augmenter de jour en jour. (*Vérité*, p. 127)

I have suggested that Zola makes indirect reference to sexual assault in this novel: 'Marc, éperdu de voir enfin la vérité se dresser ainsi, après tant de versions mensongères, revivait la scène qu'il avait *déjà reconstituée*' (*Vérité*, p. 701, my emphasis). Arguably, Zola has reconstituted a traumatic scene through 'writing' Gorgias's confessions and expressing them through the voice of his narrator:

Il [Gorgias] dit tout, en termes crus, abominables, avec des gestes qui évoquaient l'ignominie de l'atroce scène. Il dit comment, brûlé, lâché ainsi qu'une bête en folie, il avait jeté le petit Zéphirin par terre, l'avait souillé, déchirant sa chemise, tâchant de lui envelopper la tête pour qu'il ne criât plus. Il dit l'acte, sans taire aucun détail, des détails sordides, féroces, où passait la démence des passions contre nature, grandies et perverses à l'ombre des cloîtres. (*Vérité*, p. 702)

Vérité is a 'roman de la honte et du désir de justice'. These vices (shame and perverse desires) are not simply ingrained in a greedy, racist, hypocritical society in Maillebois. Arguably, the plot was not simply inspired by the Dreyfus Affair and did not just revolve around Simon's case and the injustice done unto him. *Vérité* is also scatological in a literal sense in that it studies and analyses the 'excrement' of a dirty and decadent society whose parasites it exposes and reflects as well, personal trauma.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

This project has presented the reader with an examination of selected novels of Zola's fiction: *La Fortune des Rougon*, *La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret*, *La Curée*, *La Bête humaine*, *Nana*, and *Le Docteur Pascal* in the *Rougon-Macquart*, and *Thérèse Raquin*, *Madeleine Férat*, and *Vérité* in other works. It has adopted a psycho-critical approach and has argued that their creation was mediated by a repressed sexuality. It has also advanced a theory on the presence of secrets in these novels and connected them with Abraham and Torok's theory of the crypt.

The psychoanalytic reading of these novels has suggested that these novels highlight some anxieties related to trauma. I have shown that there was a symbiotic relationship for example between *Thérèse Raquin* and both *La Fortune des Rougon* and *Le Docteur Pascal*. In my investigation of Zola's fiction, I have also demonstrated that *La Fortune des Rougon*, *La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret*, *La Bête humaine*, *La Curée*, *Nana* and *Le Docteur Pascal* principally kept secrets related to sexual anxiety, and that were exposed in *Le Docteur Pascal* and in *Vérité*. This thesis also stated that *Thérèse Raquin* and *Madeleine Férat* belong to Zola's emotional affects since they also embodied secrets, and have linked those to the narrator's discourse. In *Le Docteur Pascal* and in *Vérité*, I have substantiated my theory through close readings of the texts and drawn a tentative argument based on what was found in the novels.

I have suggested what the secrets may have been related to; whilst investigating some passages in the selected novels, I have proposed that Zola might have suspected that his father held a secret related to a child and highlighted his doubts insofar as without external evidence, he was unable to comment about the nature of this relationship. I have carefully argued that since there was no evidence to support this claim, Zola reflected his doubts primarily in the fictional representation of Marie's tombstone in *La Fortune des Rougon* and through Thérèse's miscarriage in *Thérèse Raquin*. I have demonstrated, through close readings of the texts, how

this was transmitted to the other novels and have adopted Abraham and Torok's theory of the phantom to sustain my arguments. Indeed, I have shown that Zola's fiction, principally in the texts that were analysed, is haunted by a female phantom who roams the narratives of the novels.

With regard to Zola's alleged incident in his youth as Chapter Six investigated, I have indicated that there is some evidence in some passages of the novels to suggest that the novelist represented this form of child abuse through the expression of anxiety in relation to the sexual act; this was symbolized primarily in Zéphirin's sexual assault and murder in *Vérité*.¹ I have also argued that the crime was retrospectively represented when Thérèse and Laurent make love in *Thérèse Raquin* and in *Renée* when she returns to her father to die and remembers her rape, an action which violated her childhood innocence. For the sake of the project's arguments, I have focused on these three passages in these novels, although there are other passages in the novelist's work which express his anxieties over sexuality.²

I have used four different psychoanalytic theories to support my arguments, but have also adopted a deconstructive analysis of the language to broaden my theory on Zola's secrets in his fiction and have supported my views with close readings of the selected texts. To sustain this argument I have made reference to the theories of child psychic development by Sigmund Freud, Nicolas Abraham, Maria Torok, and Jacques Lacan, especially to Abraham and Torok's theory of the crypt.³ I have also formulated my own theory in 'retrieving' the secrets: if for Derrida the secret is its secrecy, and he believes that the reader must listen to the spectre and speak with it, I have demonstrated how I speak with Zola's phantom in deconstructing and reconstructing his secrets (see Chapter One, section 3). For this, I have engaged in a dialogue between the body of Zola's language and that of psychoanalysis, and demonstrated how they assimilate in Zola's fiction, since I use a transference process, one which functions as a

¹ See Chapter 2, Part 2, and Chapter 6.

² For example: *La Confession de Claude*, *L'Assommoir*, *Germinal*, *La Terre*, *L'Œuvre*, and others.

³ Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle and other Writings*; Lacan, *Les Quatre Concepts Fondamentaux de la psychanalyse*; Abraham and Torok, *L'Écorce et le noyau* and *Le Verbier de l'homme aux Loups*.

relationship that passes between my close reading of the texts and that of the narrator's discourse. Although this work significantly argues for the connection between the novels and 'the return of the repressed' in relation to female sexuality, it also proposes alternative interpretations. This has been dealt with in Chapters Two, Three, Four and Six.

Using evidence from the texts, and the little we know about Zola's childhood, I have suggested how trauma may have functioned as a catalyst for the development of his fiction: we have seen how Zola 'buried' these secrets in the narratives of *La Fortune des Rougon* in Marie's tombstone and epitaph, as well as in *Le Passage du Pont-Neuf* in *Thérèse Raquin*, but represented them in *Le Docteur Pascal* with the return of Marie through Clotilde and through the rape and murder of Zéphirin in *Vérité*. In turn, I have identified issues from the narrator's discourse and showed that it formed part of the narrative function of the selected texts. I have demonstrated that Zola's language is to a larger extent cryptic particularly in *La Fortune des Rougon*, *Thérèse Raquin*, *Le Docteur Pascal*, and *Vérité*. Through this device, I pointed out that the novelist was able to reflect, paradoxically, his principle as a naturalist novelist: 'tout dire pour tout guérir', as Pascal recognizes (*Le Docteur Pascal*, pp. 929, 1005).⁴

In examining Zola's cryptic system of narration in the language of the texts, I have also demonstrated that his fiction, principally the selected novels, holds a female phantom who is lodged in the unconscious, one who permeates the texts, but makes itself visible through the 'return of the repressed'. I have also argued that the phantom's secret nature passes on silently from family to family in the *Rougon-Macquart* series, and related it to Abraham and Torok's theory of the crypt.⁵ Taking into consideration this factor in the previously examined texts I have formulated my own analysis with regard to Abraham and Torok's concept of the phantom: indeed, I have argued that in Zola's fiction the phantom makes itself 'visible' in the form of the expression of nostalgic feelings about a dead child who eventually returns to its

⁴ I have already demonstrated in this work how Zola can be ambiguous in his fiction since he both hides and reveals unspeakable taboo or secrets.

⁵ Abraham and Torok, *L'Écorce et le noyau*.

rightful place in its family tree. This was illustrated in the analysis of *La Fortune des Rougon*, *Thérèse Raquin*, *Le Docteur Pascal*.

Zola deals with his 'phantom' in stigmatizing his female protagonists for contributing to the death and neglect of their child; I have identified this in the novels in most female characters who have either neglected or 'killed' their baby. For example, this was illustrated in Adelaïde's crime against Marie in *La Fortune des Rougon* (in this novel I argued that Marie represented Adelaïde's daughter), in Thérèse's miscarriage in *Thérèse Raquin*, in Guillaume's mother in *Madeleine Férat* who fails to look after her son and deserts him after having enjoyed a sexual relationship with M. de Viarge, Guillaume's father, and fallen pregnant (see Chapter One, Part 2). I have also represented this in Marthe, Renée and Nana. Zola presents this crime as a sexual 'fêlure', or a flaw, in his female characters because for him they are audacious and impudent, as the narrator of *Thérèse Raquin* considers when alluding to his protagonist's sexual relationship with Laurent: 'La jeune femme semblait se faire à l'audace et à l'impudence' (*Thérèse Raquin*, p. 77). Indeed, the novelist represents his female characters as audacious and as defiant in these novels; this was represented in this work in their refusal to accept patriarchal dictates over their sexuality and, as punishment, they unwittingly inherit this flaw.

I have also highlighted that the novelist was sympathetic to his period's medical and social beliefs that female 'madness' originated in the uterus, and looked into the century's discourses on mental illness and emphasized that this (erroneous) perception of the female reproductive organ, which preoccupied the creative imagination of the nineteenth century, was used as a powerful cultural metaphor in order to attack women.

Alongside Abraham's theory of the phantom, I have also juxtaposed the haunting effect that the *Rougon-Macquart* narratives express with the theories of infantile sexuality of Freud and Lacan, and with Freud's theory of dreams.⁶ These were valuable for the examination

⁶ Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, pp. 74 and 77.

of *La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret* and *La Bête humaine*. I have argued that Freud's theories and those of Abraham and Torok merge because together they create a dual unity which supports infantile psychic and sexual development. This connection is identified when the child constructs an image of the maternal as the object of his or her desire, and, as Abraham and Torok believe is an 'undivided entity gradually defined by a constant process of division from the mother'. This was explained in Chapter One.

In Chapter One I have given a review of the work of critics who have explored Zola's fiction and others who deal with the unconscious, and pointed out their valuable contributions to the argument made about Zola's repressed sexuality. Esther Rashkin's work on family secrets sustained my interpretation on Zola's fiction.⁷ Rashkin's study was based on the examination of how phantoms can be concealed rhetorically within literature and the way that their presence is detected and exposed as a driving force behind the actions and discourse of characters. In contrast to her interpretation (she adheres to Abraham's theory of the phantom in her reading of her chosen texts), I have suggested that the secrets which permeate the novels were lodged in the narrator's discourse and that he gave the reader clues as to their significance. These were expressed through an encrypted language in which a system of encoded signs and signifiers figured prominently, as their function was to unveil the secrets that Zola arguably kept. I have given examples in Chapter Two during the examination of the cemetery of L'aire Saint-Mittre and in Marie's tombstone in *La Fortune des Rougon* and compared its cryptic passages to those of the passages that were analysed in *Thérèse Raquin*, namely the description of Le Passage du Pont-Neuf.

I have suggested that Zola believed that female sexuality might have been the cause of his father's scandal and that for this he punished women who expressed an overwhelming sexuality in his fiction and his method of dealing with it was to dispatch his female protagonists to their death as a form of punishment. Besides 'killing' his female protagonists for being over

⁷ Rashkin, *Family Secrets*, p. 2.

sexualized, Zola also took an interest in their sexuality; I have highlighted his ambiguity with regard to this issue and drawn attention to the narrator, who, with the help of his author, enjoys a textual/sexual *jouissance* whilst describing his female characters' bodies, and have given as examples Nana and Renée as victims of Zola's voyeurism and fetishism. During my analysis of the texts, I have also argued that Zola eventually 'matures' into a progressive and open-minded man in relation to women. This theme formed part of my research into *Le Docteur Pascal*. In this novel I have shown that these changes were due to Zola's affair with Jeanne Rozerot, with whom he fell in love and had two children. Nevertheless, I have argued that *Vérité* also projects anxieties and related them to both national and personal trauma.

Chapter Two investigated how Zola represented Marie's secret in *La Fortune des Rougon* and in *Thérèse Raquin* and followed the clues and indications that the narrator of these novels provided in this regard. This chapter was divided in two parts. The first dealt with how the secret was transmitted in the narrative: it showed that Zola was pointing his readers to the mystery and that there was sufficient evidence in the narrator's discourse to point the reader to a mystery or to a secret. For this, I substantiated my arguments with Genette's definition of the novel and his distinction between it and historical narrative discourse. This chapter argued that Adelaïde Foucque embodies the secret; I have shown that she too holds a secret which is related to Miette. I have also demonstrated that Marie/Miette was possibly her daughter even though the narrator was assuming, or rather claiming, in this novel, that Marie's death was due to the murder of innocents during the French Revolution.

In this chapter I have also shown that the function of introjection was linked to Zola's catharsis; this was relevant to the analysis of the 'crypt' where Marie is buried in *La Fortune des Rougon*.⁸ I have argued that Abraham's notion of the crypt went hand in hand with Marie's secret and shown that Zola obliquely transmitted it on the epitaph of her tombstone in 'telling' the story of Marie. I have also provided alternative interpretations and highlighted the

⁸ Abraham and Torok, *L'Ecorce et le noyau*, p. xi.

nineteenth-century's obsessions with the occult and the mystic and argued that Zola might have wanted to attract his readers through this interpretation. I have also shown that Marie's presence could symbolize the birth of a new French Republic. For these interpretations, I provided critics who worked on those subjects and gave counter-examples.

In this chapter, I have deconstructed sentences, phrases, and words in these novels to support the arguments I presented. Indeed, I have connected Marie's place of burial in Plassans cemetery to the 'galerie du Pont-Neuf' in *Thérèse Raquin* and established a link between them in showing that both indicated the death of a child through signifiers which were contained in their own encoded signs, which, in turn pointed to the secret. Furthermore, I have argued that there existed a link between Le Passage du Pont-Neuf in *Thérèse Raquin* with the description of L'aire Saint-Mittre cemetery in *La Fortune des Rougon*: I have guided the reader to the presence of a 'phantom' or the ghost of baby Marie, as shown in both narratives, and given textual examples to emphasize the mystery. This, in turn, supports Freud's theory of the 'return of the repressed'. In addition to the connection that existed between both novels, I have juxtaposed Adelaïde's story with that of Thérèse, and argued that some aspects of the narrative are linked by their cryptic nature. This is reflected in the allusion to the death of a child haunting both narratives. In these novels, I have focused on specific phrases, sentences, and words which pointed me to the secret and have deconstructed them, drawing attention to the cryptic factor enveloping Marie's death and her epitaph on the tomb. In Part 2, I have also investigated how the process of infantile sexuality in this novel and in *Madeleine Férat* progressed. I have also adopted Abraham's theory of the phantom and Freud's theory of infantile sexuality, principally the Œdipus complex, and argued that the narrator was expressing symptoms of a repressed sexuality and insecurity with regard to the maternal. I highlighted the narrator's jealousy and resentment towards intruders in *Thérèse Raquin* and *Madeleine Férat*, and argued that these were the main factors which governed these novels. I have emphasized the narrator's involvement with his characters. In this part, I

have demonstrated that infantile libidinal organization operated in *Thérèse Raquin* and in *Madeleine Férat*. Owing to the repressed nature of the secret, the narrator's anxiety with regard to the maternal image was also represented as holding a 'phantom' and functioned as a dual unity in conjunction with the Œdipus complex.

In Chapter Three I have also explored the theory of the phantom in *La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret* and *La Bête humaine* through the disturbing effect of maternal neglect that both Serge and Jacques suffer. This was represented in the figure of a female whose sexuality obsessed both protagonists; in Serge's case it was represented in the Virgin Mary and in Albine. In Jacques's case it was represented in Séverine and to a lesser extent in Flore. As 'lunatics' (I have shown that Serge and Jacques are individuals who have suffered psychological effects from maternal neglect), Serge and Jacques re-live the necessary elements which contributed to the fulfilment of their wishes and engage with an imaginary process of infantile sexuality with their objects of desire, the Virgin Mary, Albine, and Séverine respectively. I have insisted on the process of the oral stage in these novels since Serge and Jacques expressed symptoms of sexual insecurity and anxieties towards the maternal image. In referring to the image of the female as haunting both protagonists, I have highlighted Serge's and Jacques's identity crisis, which I have argued originated from a lack of maternal nurture and bonding, creating an oedipal complex in both. In order to recreate an infantile sexuality, I have demonstrated how both protagonists pass through dreams which they create in order to satisfy an unfulfilled libido. I have used Freud's theory of the interpretation of dreams to add substance to my arguments about Serge and Jacques, and have argued that they represented fantasies of the unconscious, and through these fantasies gratified their repressed sexuality. I have divided the process of infantile sexuality that permeates these novels into two stages: the first one pertained to the dream's formation; I have shown in this part that Serge and Jacques enter a hallucinatory phase. This phase was reflected as the one in which both characters are exposed to visions of the female as nurturer. I have argued that both characters experience 'un rêve

obsédant' with regard to acquiring the female vagina and establishing themselves within its confine.⁹ I have made use of objects and places to suggest that they represented for the characters the maternal womb. I have indicated that the 'dreams' which both characters went through functioned as fantasies of the unconscious. I have also reminded the reader that the theory of the crypt also functions in these novels: I have established that the narrator in *La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret* was using Serge's emotions to reflect his own: in the scene where Serge is hallucinating about the Virgin Mary, the repressed is manifest; I have argued that this passage emphasized the mourning aspect in relation to the representation of dead children (see Chapter Two). As part of an alternative interpretation I have also dealt, in this Part, with Zola's political crusading against the power of the Church and highlighted his anticlericalism in condemning the Catholic Church's doctrine on celibacy. This led me to discuss how Zola uses Serge's psychological disturbance as a result of the Church's hold on him, and as a deliberate appeal to his reader to point out to them the Church's dominance and hypocrisy.

I have also shown that Jacques's character is antithetical to that of Serge and demonstrated that Jacques's appropriation of the maternal womb differs from that of Serge: for example, I argued that Jacques fled from the incestuous desire, but killed women in order to avenge the 'offenses très anciennes' (*La Bête humaine*, p. 1044) which he suffered because he was denied maternal nurture. Jacques's aggressive personality which was reflected as sexual psychosis when confronted with women was examined. I have argued that it originated from an unfulfilled infantile sexual development.

My thesis also examined in Part 2 of Chapter Three, the alienation process, one which reflects the phallic stage. This stage played an important part in the characters' individuation since both reflected their image, in this phase, onto that of their fathers. Indeed, once Serge and Jacques fulfilled their libido in relation to the maternal image, they identified with the masculine, in order to break away from the maternal. I have argued that this stage was

⁹ Paul Radestock, quoted by Freud in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, p. 77.

important for Serge and Jacques since it led to their individuation from the feminine, the female, and the maternal, siding with the male figure to avenge the trauma that affected them, caused by women's sexuality. In abandoning the maternal, Serge and Jacques joined forces with the male figure: God and Archangias in Serge's case and Roubaud in Jacques's case. Once again, the examination of these novels has shown that the theory of the phantom sits alongside that of the Œdipus complex. Since the child lives in a symbolic relationship with the object of desire, the mother, I have also juxtaposed this desire with Zola's need to live in a symbiotic relationship with the language in these novels.

Since Zola lived in a symbiotic relationship with his language, I have also demonstrated that the language expresses sadomasochistic and misogynistic desires which were aimed at the female protagonists. In Chapter Four, I have highlighted Zola's attraction to and disgust at female genitalia as well as his sadistic and masochistic desires. In this chapter I have demonstrated how the narrator held the female sexual organ as a fetish to gratify his libido. This chapter was divided in two parts. In Part One, I have highlighted the importance of how prostitution was generally perceived and have discussed the role of the creative imagination during Zola's time. I have considered it as an important factor which contributed also to the creation of these novels, but nonetheless, I have demonstrated that male neurosis about the female sexual organ is present in these novels. I have questioned Zola's investigative methods of empirical observation of his society and argued that although *La Curée* and *Nana* draw attention to a debauched society, Renée and Nana are the victims of the narrator's sexual fantasies. In this part, I have also examined to what extent the narrator, in exhibiting sadomasochistic desires towards his female characters, fell prey to their sexual attributes, and to what degree auto-eroticism, voyeurism, and fetishism are symptomatic of a repressed sexuality. I have highlighted their presence in the language and linked them to the narrator's desire for the female body. I have also stressed that although Zola's repressed sexuality transpired in these novels, the novelist was nonetheless drawing attention to Renée's and

Nana's situations and reflected upon their family environment, yet also enjoyed stigmatizing them for being sexually independent. However, I have maintained that these novels have a 'sensational' form of writing and have remarked that they were also used to incite and 'excite' a curious readership. I have compared other literary texts which used this form of writing and attributed them to the nineteenth century French Sensation fiction in order to contextualize Zola's texts. In this part, I have also made reference to the English sensation novels and highlighted some critics who were against this mode of writing during this period.

Borrowing from Berne's theory of 'transactional analysis', I have linked Renée's and Nana's behaviour to their lack of maternal nurture, arguing that both re-enacted their childhood experiences by unconsciously repeating patterns which resulted in their adult behaviour.¹⁰ I have established a link between Nana's behaviour in *Nana* and that in *L'Assommoir*. I have also demonstrated that Zola uses the naturalist method of observation to satisfy his own sexual curiosity in relation to the female sexual organ, and have highlighted his obsessions. I have used the works on masochism by Giles Deleuze and Leopold von Sacher-Masoch and stressed that their theories on sado-masochism adapt well to Zola's interest in the female sexual organ.¹¹ I have concluded that Zola uses his own as well as his male characters' privileges over female sexuality to express sexual fantasies and fetishist desires, but that he also held preconceptions about female sexuality as evil, and that Zola's sadomasochistic desire over his female protagonists turned into aesthetic murder in order to satisfy male sexual insecurity. In these previous chapters I have stressed that the texts under consideration emphasized sexual trauma (interpreted as sexual inhibitions). I have also stressed as well that the novelist used the topos of female sexuality, especially when related to explicit sexual episodes, to shock his reading public; I underlined the method adopted and presented it as an exhibition of collective masculine attacks on women, but also as sensational effect in Chapter Four.

¹⁰ Berne, *Games People Play*.

¹¹ Deleuze and von Sacher-Masoch, *Masochism: Coldness and Cruelty and Venus in Fur*.

In Chapter Five, I have identified Pascal's secret in the return of Marie through Clotilde. Indeed, through the clue that Pascal/Zola presented when Pascal returns to his family tree, I have demonstrated in this chapter that Clotilde's character functioned as the go-between who brought Marie back into the family tree. In showing that this novel is not the conclusion of the *Rougon-Macquart*, as expressed by Zola, I have established that Zola indeed exposed it as a family secret. I have identified it in Clotilde and shown that Pascal was worried that this secret would be revealed. Moreover, my investigation of this novel has shown that the novelist uses the character of Clotilde, as the female descendant of Adelaïde, to repair the malfunctioning gene which she had inherited from her ancestor. In replacing Marie, Clotilde's role is to open an old wound and cure it through practising incest with her uncle. I have argued that this incest functioned as a necessary factor to the planning of *Le Docteur Pascal* since it contributed to Marie's return to the family. Through incest, Clotilde released what was repressed in Pascal (the trauma of knowing that Adelaïde had committed a 'crime' in neglecting Marie.) In sleeping with Clotilde and having a child with her, Pascal replaced the Marie in the family tree and so was able to come to terms with the secret which haunted him.

In Chapter Six I have identified Marie through Clotilde and established her return to the family tree and also located another traumatic secret. In this final chapter, I have examined *Vérité* and queried the nature of the truth behind the criticisms of the Church and government and highlighted Zola's criticisms of the Catholic Church and his abhorrence of anti-Semitism which pervaded during the time of the Dreyfus Affair. I have emphasized the political and anticlerical attacks which underlined this novel and its topic of pederasty. I have divided this chapter in two parts. The first part discussed the political, anticlerical nature of the novel and its condemnation of anti-Semitism, and how Zola used these themes deliberately to appeal to his readers and to highlight his society's hypocritical attitudes. In the second part, I suggested that the sexual assault and murder of Zephirin symbolized personal trauma and stressed that Zola chooses Marc rather than Pascal, as his *porte-parole* in *Vérité*. The textual analysis in this

part has provided some evidence taken from certain passages in the text which deal with the unconscious and demonstrated that Marc's character is necessary in this novel since his function is to help confront the phantom within.

This analysis has concluded that the selected novels in this study of Zola's fiction are indeed cryptic. It has used textual evidence to support the theory presented herein. It has argued that although Zola analyzes a family under Second Empire France in the *Rougon-Macquart* and shows its hereditary fault in portraying a corrupt and decadent society, it is, nonetheless, also used as a means of analysing sexual insecurities and anxieties.

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