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BEHIND CLOSED DOORS:

An enquiry into the description of domestic interiors
in Zola's Rougon-Macquart novels.

Thesis submitted by Arnold SAXTON to the University of London for
the Degree of Master of Philosophy, in December 1985.

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

The point of departure of this study is the home in Zola's Rougon-Macquart novels. Scant attention has been paid by all but a few zolistes to the descriptions of private rooms in the novels, and this study examines in turn three major areas: bedroom, dining-room and salon.

The link sought between these areas is that of self-indulgence, which Zola sees as contributing greatly to the downfall of the Second Empire. In addition, the rooms are examined both as settings, and as the theatres of such action as quarrels, dinner-parties and dances. The scope of the enquiry admits consideration of public rooms (dance halls, restaurants etc.) which house similar activities.

Consideration is given to documentary aspects of description, but stress is laid in the imagery and on the themes revealed in Zola's handling of his material. In particular, Zola's attitudes are shown to be fundamentally ambiguous, as he lovingly describes what he morally deploras; negative, in some respects, as he seeks to minimise or even to eliminate some settings; and evolving, as the series of novels progresses.

It is shown that a rigid categorisation of rooms by function cannot be maintained, and two further sections of the survey are devoted, respectively, to an exploration of Zola's tendency to blur the functions of rooms, either literally or in his use of imagery; and to some consideration of the interplay of secretiveness and flaunting, of privacy and intrusion, in relation to domestic interiors.

A final chapter sums up the enquiry, with emphasis on points judged of particular interest. Certain novels, notably La Curée and Au Bonheur des Dames, are singled out as being central to the arguments put forward.

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INTRODUCTION

Some thirty years have elapsed since the fiftieth anniversary of Zola's death (1902) signalled the first important reappraisals of his work. The vast corpus of writing which has appeared during those thirty years includes several important studies of the descriptive material in Zola's novels, principally the Rougon-Macquart series.

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In approaching the descriptions in which the novels abound, many critics have concentrated on those which may be claimed to transcend the merely documentary, to approach the realm of fantasy, poeticisation or symbolism: amongst these, the Paradise garden, the mines in Germinal, the markets of Le Centre de Paris have perhaps attracted most attention. This preference, on the part of interpreters of Zola's work, for the more flamboyant descriptive passages invited until recent years relative neglect of descriptions which might, on the surface at least, be considered too close to the original documentary to be of any great interest. In particular, Zola's description of the domestic background to the lives of his characters escaped sustained critical attention until the publication in the early 1970s of two important works.

INTRODUCTION

Some thirty years have elapsed since the fiftieth anniversary of Zola's death (1952) signalled the first important reappraisals of his work. The vast corpus of writing which has appeared during those thirty years includes several important studies of the descriptive material in Zola's novels, principally the Rougon-Macquart series. Zola's claim to be a chronicler of the Second Empire implies a concern with the outward features of the society he sought to evoke which in turn affords a rich field for commentators. In addition, ready access to Zola's working notes and drafts has enabled critics to trace the development of each novel from first idea to finished product, and to study the documentation so central to Zola's method. To a degree unparalleled amongst novelists of the nineteenth century, Zola's work provides a wealth of source materials to the critic.

In approaching the descriptions in which the novels abound, many critics have concentrated on those which may be claimed to transcend the merely documentary, to approach the realm of fantasy, poeticisation or symbolism: amongst these, the Paradou garden, the mines in Germinal, the markets of Le Ventre de Paris have perhaps attracted most attention. This preference, on the part of interpreters of Zola's work, for the more flamboyant descriptive passages implied until recent years relative neglect of descriptions which might, on the surface at least, be considered too close to the original documentation to be of any great interest. In particular, Zola's description of the domestic background to the lives of his characters escaped sustained critical attention until the publication in the early 1970s of two important works.

Jean Borie, in his study Zola et les mythes; de la nausée au salut,¹ seeks to apply Freudian techniques of analysis to the Zola canon (including novels written before and after the Rougon-Macquart), and in doing so provides many stimulating insights into the subtext of the descriptions supplied by Zola. In a review of Borie's book, Philippe Hamon - himself the author of a key article, examining examples of Zola's descriptive writing from the standpoint of a linguist⁽²⁾ - notes that Borie does not attempt a systematic, exhaustive study of any given area of description, and adds:

"On aurait également aimé voir, sur quelques exemples étudiés de près, cette circulation sémantique, ce 'va-et-vient des métaphores' (p195) bien repéré également par J. Borie, que Zola utilise pour 'décloisonner' le monde ordonné (p8) de la bourgeoisie."³

Borie would, no doubt, protest that his aims lay elsewhere than in a particular case-study such as Hamon advocates; moreover, such a task had already been accomplished several years earlier. Jacques Dubois published his article "Les refuges de Gervaise; pour un décor symbolique de L'Assommoir" in 1965,⁴ and incorporated it into his symposium on L'Assommoir published in 1973 in the series

¹ Editions du Seuil 1971

² P. Hamon: 'Qu'est-ce qu'une description?' in Poétique III, 1972, pp 465-485

³ in Les Cahiers Naturalistes 18 no. 44, 1972, p 231

⁴ in Les Cahiers Naturalistes 30, 1965, pp 105-117

"Thèmes et Textes"¹. Dubois's work brings a fresh approach to the analysis of descriptive material, not least because he takes as his point of departure the drab and seemingly unpromising world of the working class, showing it to be rich in thematic, and indeed poetic material. Dubois, alone of critics who devoted a study to a single novel by Zola before Borie's work appeared,² seems prepared to concede that the domestic scene has interest or that what appears to be merely the transcription of observed reality may reveal patterns of meaning, imagery and themes.

In more recent years, exponents of "la nouvelle critique" have devoted much attention to Zola's descriptive passages, often as part of a reassessment of the whole nature and status of description in the novel as genre. The most substantial of these studies develops the approach proposed by Dubois into the systematic analysis of the text of L'Assommoir. J. Allard, in Zola : le chiffre du texte³, despite certain passages which carry Allard's preoccupation with numbers to a level perhaps more enthusiastic than convincing, offers a series of insights which provide a salutary reminder that no description need be rejected as material unworthy of the exegeticist. Here, surely, is the "exemple étudié de près", postulated by Hamon, in this case, a

¹ Larousse-Université, 1973

² e.g. E. M. Grant: Zola's 'Germinal' : a critical and historical study : Leicester U.P. 1970
R. B. Grant: Zola's 'Son Excellence Eugène Rougon' : an historical and critical study : Durham U.P. Durham N. Carolina 1960
M. Kanes: Zola's 'La Bête Humaine' : a study in literary creation : Univ. of California Press 1962

³ Presses Universitaires de Grenoble/Presses de l'Université du Québec 1978

single novel subjected to close analysis.

Other recent critical works approach description from a more exclusively theoretical angle. Thus, Philippe Bonnefis has contributed articles on Zola to two symposia emanating from the Université de Lille III. His studies, "Le descripteur mélancolique"¹ and "Intérieurs naturalistes"² extend their scope far beyond the implications of their titles, and, though stimulating, disappoint the reader seeking the "quelques exemples étudiés de près". However, another contribution to the symposium La Description provides a closer approximation to Hamon's ideal study - Alain Buisine undertakes a systematic analysis of the role of enumerative descriptions in Verne's Vingt Mille Lieues sous les Mers³. In his incipit, Buisine maintains that ...

"La description est le lieu du regard, et le pur regard est l'ennemi premier de la fiction [.....] L'écriture descriptive, bourre où s'amortit le projet narratif, est toujours plus ou moins capitonnage."⁵

¹ in La Description, Centre de Recherches Spécialisées, Université de Lille III 1974 pp 103-151

² in Intime, intimité, intimisme, *ibid* 1976 pp 163-198

³ A. Buisine: 'Un cas limite de la description; l'énumération' in op.cit. pp 81-102

⁴ *ibid* p 81

⁵ *ibid*, footnote

Such a dismissal of the role and function of descriptive writing in the novel as a genre surely condemns vast areas of the works of Zola, whose preoccupation with rendering the world inhabited by his characters both plausible and significant is central to his aims. Buisine's arguments may be countered, however, as being too categoric. May not action also be "le lieu du regard", as much as description? Cannot description provide a "repoussoir" rather than a "capitonnage" or "bourre"? The reader of a novel must surely anticipate that the characters of a fictional narration will act out their story against an identifiable background. The novelist may decide to accord greater or lesser importance to this, and may consciously use it to deepen understanding of character and plot. The case for description has been expressed by Barbara Hardy, writing about G. Eliot's Middlemarch:

"Some of the scenes in Dorothea's room, or in Mrs Garth's kitchen, or in the Lydgates' drawing-room are filled with prolific examples of the detail which is neither totally symbolic nor painstakingly naturalistic, but which has a superficial vividness which plays a strong part in the life of the novel" ¹

This quotation happily combines two concerns of the present study. Professor Hardy's use of examples drawn from domestic scenes provides a justification, if any were needed, of the choice of such scenes in Zola's novels as material worthy of analysis. Equally, her affirmation

¹ B. Hardy: 'Middlemarch : The Surface of the Novel.' Ch 30' in Middlemarch : Critical Approaches to the Novel ed. B. Hardy, University of London, Athlone Press 1967, p 170

of the value of description in "the life of the novel", reflects what will be a major assumption in the following chapters; namely, that descriptive material per se requires no justification, no theoretical defence to maintain its traditional place amongst the novelist's tools. To this extent, at least, the approach of "la nouvelle critique" will not be followed.

The intention is to attempt a survey of the equivalent in the Rougon-Macquart novels of the type of domestic interior mentioned by Professor Hardy. Material of this nature abounds, since Zola's concern to describe the rooms in which his characters live is usually evident; but, as has been noted, the material remains largely unexplored with the exception of the works by Dubois and Allard on L'Assommoir and Borie's more general study.

The parameters of the investigation are as follows. Within the house, as generally described by Zola, three rooms can easily be seen to dominate, the bedroom (and its occasional annexe, the "cabinet de toilette"), the dining-room and the salon. The present study will examine each of these in turn, with the object of discovering what sub-categories may be defined, what links may be established, and what tendencies discerned in Zola's descriptive passages. Two extensions to the basic notion of "descriptions of domestic rooms" emerged as this work proceeded. Firstly, the activities of the occupants of those rooms; social activities such as entertaining guests in salons and dining-rooms can radically change the character of the room itself, hence the need to analyse Zola's evocations of those same activities.

Secondly, the field widened to cover the public equivalents of the private rooms; restaurants, dormitories, canteens can suggest lines of approach to, or confirm the trends discerned in, Zola's purely "domestic" descriptions. These areas outside the home have been restricted to the most relevant, so that, for example, the approach to that vast organism the "Au Bonheur des Dames" department store, has been very selective.

The major omission amongst domestic rooms is, of course, the kitchen. In view of the relatively small number of descriptions of this room per se in Zola's works, it may seem unnecessary to exclude it, given that certain working-class kitchens, forming a part of a living-room, are indeed reviewed in the present study. It is evident, too, that the symbolic values of the kitchen, as source of food, warmth, domestic care and so on, might provide findings very relevant to the main thrust of the thesis.

Two capital reasons may be advanced for the exclusion of kitchens. Firstly, the kitchen is not a living area, not a place in which characters linger. Other than working-class mothers, only one heroine spends time voluntarily in her kitchen: H^élène Grandjean in Une Page d'Amour. In the main, the kitchen remains the domain of the servant, and even here, Zola is often sparing of details; the Josserand kitchen in Pot-Bouille, for example, so important in the life of the maid Adèle, barely elicits commentary. Indeed, it could be argued that Zola does not allot to the kitchen the important role that might be expected for it.

A further reason for omitting the kitchen can be found in Le Ventre de Paris. The preparation room of the pork-butcher Quenu has all the attributes of a kitchen, an area where raw food is processed. It acts

as a link between the lovingly described charcuterie and the vast market, and it would be very difficult to give full consideration to kitchen without referring to these other décors of the novel. Between the available descriptive material to be gleaned from the whole series of novels, and the vast proliferation of lyrical or satirical description of food and food shops in this one novel, an imbalance seems inevitable. Such a topic would draw far more upon passages describing things and places outside the home than inside, and so should be reserved for a quite separate investigation.

One of Zola's conscious preoccupations in the Rougon-Macquart has been kept firmly in mind. In the "Préface" to La Fortune des Rougon, an introduction which has the force of a manifesto, Zola evokes:

"le débordement des appétits, le large soulèvement de notre âge, qui se rue aux jouissances." ¹

The two "appétits" which Zola perceives, and frequently links, as striking at the heart of French society during the Second Empire, are those of power and pleasure. It is the latter, the more evidently related to the "jouissances" of the quotation, which is manifested in the pleasures of bedrooms and dining-rooms and even in the socialising of the salons in Zola's novels. A leading theme of the present study, then, is the exploration of the links between gratification and the domestic background, as well as the corollary to this, the ascetic way of life which, for Zola, seems to be linked with the other "appétit" - the lust for power.

¹ RMI p4 All volume and page references are to the Pléiade edition: Les Rougon-Macquart ed. A. Lanoux, notes by H. Mitterand, Fasquelles & Gallimard, 1960-1967

Power dominates the first of the twenty novels, but the second, La Curée, orchestrates the two themes in the personages of Saccard and his wife Renée. La Curée can be seen as more central to Zola's arguments than its predecessor, which, important though it undoubtedly must be acknowledged to be as initiatory to the whole series, remains to some degree clogged by expository material. La Curée, and in particular the "Dossier" in which Zola expounds his ideas, presents the author's point of view both analytically and poetically. Defining his "sujet moral" in the "Dossier", Zola states:

"la rapidité de la fortune, les plaisirs fous, l'abus des jouissances qui blasent et qui font chercher des jouissances plus aiguës, ont jeté cette femme dans une sorte d'ivresse, cette femme ayant d'ailleurs par éducation des tendances à jouir." 1

We may further note a significant change made by Zola to the proofs of La Curée, in a sentence now occurring on p 367 of RMI.

"Et, dans la ville où le sang de décembre était à peine lavé, grandissait, timide encore, cette folie de jouissance qui devait jeter la patrie au cabanon des nations pauvres et déshonorées."

Zola originally wrote "cette folie d'argent", and the alteration, at a late stage of composition, indicates his preoccupation with the theme of "la jouissance" as the rot in the country's moral fibre. The sentence closes a long paragraph in which Eugène Rougon's phrase, "Paris se mettait à table et rêvait gaudriole au dessert"², coupled with other images of pleasure ("des tintements encore affaiblis de vaisselle et de baisers" "ces petites maisons dont les rideaux soigneusement tirés

¹ Bibliothèque Nationale. Nouvelles Acquisitions françaises no. 10282 fo, 301. The whole passage is underlined in Zola's manuscript, with 'par éducation' underscored twice.

² *ibid*

ne laissent voir que des ombres de femmes"), indicates that Zola saw indulgence as rooted in the homes of the citizens.

Any exhaustive study of the search for gratification in Zola's novels would include full analysis of such places as the theatre (Nana), the markets (Le Ventre de Paris) and the department store (Au Bonheur des Dames). That these are excluded from the scope of the present study need not be seen as a weakening of the argument, since, by their very richness and complexity, such dominant images run the risk of overshadowing the less flamboyant manifestations of self-indulgence as a worker's wedding (L'Assommoir) or a bourgeois salon (e.g. Une Page d'Amour). The exploration of such apparently respectable scenes will confirm, however, that gratification has permeated the society of which Zola writes, evoking in a splendidly poetic passage in La Curée, "le vice [qui], venu de haut, coulait dans les ruisseaux".¹

A section of this paragraph deserves to be quoted at length, since it magnificently sums up the glamour as well as the sordidness of the rush towards pleasure.

"Et, il semblait, la nuit, lorsqu'on passait les ponts, que la Seine charriât au milieu de la ville endormie, les ordures de la cité, miettes tombées de la table, noeuds de dentelle laissés sur les divans, chevelures oubliées dans les fiacres, billets de banque glissés des corsages, tout ce que la brutalité du désir et le contentement immédiat de l'instinct jettent à la rue, après l'avoir brisé et souillé. Alors, dans le sommeil fiévreux de Paris, et mieux encore que dans sa quête haletante du grand jour, on sentait le détraquement cérébral, le cauchemar doré et voluptueux d'une ville folle de son or et de sa chair. Jusqu'à minuit, les violons chantaient; puis les fenêtres s'éteignaient, et les ombres descendaient sur la ville. C'était comme une alcôve colossale où l'on aurait soufflé la dernière bougie, éteint la dernière pudeur."²

¹ *ibid.* p 435

² *ibid*

Precise images create a fantasmagoric vision, evoking successively the pleasures of feasting ("miettes tombées de la table"), of sexual licence ("noeuds de dentelle.....chevelures oubliées.....") and of social gatherings ("jusqu'à minuit, les violons chantaient"). Sleep too can be a form of gratification, and Zola's evocation of the "sommeil fiévreux" also encompasses "le cauchemar doré et voluptueux", leading in turn to an image of the whole city as a place of illicit passion, "alcôve colossale où l'on aurait éteint la dernière pudeur". Clearly, this highly imaginative passage indicates a link between private behaviour ("table", "divans", "alcôve" create an ambiance of intimate debauchery) and public morality, since Zola concludes the paragraph with the image of the "arms" of the Tuileries outstretched to embrace.

Nor is it by chance that so exuberant and image-laden a passage occurs in La Curée, a novel of the upper bourgeoisie. Moved though Zola (and his readers) may be by the spectacle of working-class misery, it is nonetheless in his evocation of the private houses of the rich that he is able to give free rein to the imaginative process. The basis of his method remains his scrupulous attention to documentation, as examination of the "Dossiers" shows. But the result so often transcends the "painstakingly naturalistic", to quote Professor Hardy again, that it may be argued that the domestic scene merits attention on a par with that accorded to the famous descriptions of the mine, the market, the Paradou garden or the plains of La Beauce.

Following the examination of the chosen areas of the house, the later sections of the thesis consider some of the issues raised. In particular, the question of compartmentalisation within the house became an important theme as the study progressed, and provides the material

for a survey of the ease - or difficulty - with which rooms can change their identity in Zola's novels. The final chapter provides the title of the whole study: "Behind Closed Doors". Increasingly, questions of privacy became more intriguing, in particular when considering a novel such as Pot-Bouille, from which extended passages of description are puzzlingly absent. Without pursuing the rigorous path of G. Genette, an attempt has been made to approach the question of the outsider's view of the seemingly sacred domestic interior, and to trace the oddly indeterminate frontier which, in the Rougon-Macquart novels, separates the private domain from the public view.

BEDROOMS IN LES ROUGON-MACQUART

Jean Borie has shown ⁽¹⁾ the extreme complexity of the role of the bedroom in Zola's novels. In particular, his Freudian exegesis finds themes and images in Zola's text which Borie relates to Zola's sexual malaise, and to his relatively late acceptance of the positive values of human sexuality. Both Borie and J. C. Lapp, in his Zola before the Rougon-Macquart ⁽²⁾, demonstrate, by their consideration of scenes from Madeleine Féral and Thérèse Raquin, that Zola's obsessions date from his earliest creative period.

In the course of the present study, reference will be made to Borie's seminal analysis. However, its selective nature must be seen as a limiting factor. Borie tends to examine the significance of middle-class dwellings, leaving aside the homes of the poor; in general, he pays scant attention to the detail of the description, an exception being his consideration of Renée Saccard's bedroom; and he confines his study to private bedrooms, ignoring the few but important examples of dormitories or similar communal arrangements.

In seeking to extend the scope of Borie's analysis, a useful beginning may be made with his suggestion that bedrooms group themselves into 'chambres' and 'alcôves', ⁽³⁾ the latter being particularly associated with the bedroom as a haven of sensuality, of "la jouissance". One might therefore expect the bedrooms of the "grandes amoureuses" of the Rougon-Macquart to be described as "alcôves", and indeed some of them are; those of Blanche Muller and of Renée in La Curée [RM I pp444, 477, 478] and of Irma Bécot in L'Oeuvre [RM IC p 250]. Doubts are cast, however, on the validity of this generalisation when it is noted that Clorinde in Son Excellence Eugène Rougon is never shown in an "alcôve", the word being used only in a general,

(1) op. cit.

(2) University of Toronto Press 1964

(3) op. cit. p 128

non-representational evocation of her amorous career.

"Puis, d'alcôve en alcôve, d'étape en étape, comme apothéose, pour satisfaire une dernière volonté et un dernier orgueil, elle venait de poser sa belle tête froide sur l'oreiller impérial".

[RM II p 333]

Examination of Nana confirms these doubts, as the word "alcôve" is never applied to any of Nana's bedrooms, though she surely is the character whose room has the most flagrant erotic associations.

Moreover, evidence to support a re-assessment of Borie's categorisation is found in several novels where non-sensual bedrooms are described as "alcôves"; those of the Quenu couple [Le Ventre de Paris RM I p 656], Octave Mouret in Pot-Bouille [RM III p 7], and the late Mme Hourdequin [La Terre RM IV p 453]. All these references encompass the literal use of the word, denoting a recess into which the bed may be set, a space-saving device with eminently decent and practical associations.

However, Zola does not entirely exclude the sensual from these brief and literal references. The Quenus's bed, "un lit fait pour dormir" is in itself sensual though not erotic, and is set in "une alcôve moite". Borie suggests that adjectives such as "moite" hold sexual connotations which he links to the "boue" of the streets, though here the sweat of the corpulent couple seems an equally appropriate reference. Mme Hourdequin's bed, in an alcove suggestively "tendue de rouge" is conquered by Jacqueline, the widower's mistress, who "s'y étala, y écarta les bras et les cuisses, pour le tenir tout entier". Zola continues to use the word with stress laid on its sensual connotations, in such phrases as "cette senteur d'alcôve" rising from the street to affect Renée in La Curée [RM I pp 457-8], "le chuchotement d'alcôve" following the suggestive "tableau vivant" in the same novel [ibid p 545]; "un jour et un souffle d'alcôve" in a church, which seem "peu convenables" to Lisa in Le Ventre de Paris [RM I p 809], and in La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret, with references to "des recueils d'alcôve, une senteur d'amour" among the rose bushes [RM I p 1337] and to "une langueur

d'alcôve" [ibid p 1507] emanating from the Tree, already described as "l'alcôve verte" [ibid p 1407]. These examples are, we note, evocations rather than descriptions. Zola assumes that the reader will understand the implication that "alcôve" acts as a form of code, a veiled allusion to another reality behind the literal meaning of the word.

More positively, Zola writes of Florent, occupying the naïve Augustine's room in Le Ventre de Paris, that "[il] eût souffert dans une alcôve de femme" [RM I p 713]. Here, Zola implies the contrast between the potentially dangerous "alcôve" nature of a woman's room, and the reality, a reflection of the reassuring ingenuousness of Augustine, permeating the room she once occupied. This room is no temple of "la jouissance". It is equipped only with "un étroit lit de fer" [ibid], which, by its dimensions and implied austerity, suggests the very opposite of sensuality, and, as such, pleases the chaste, timid and dedicated Florent.

For if there is a polarisation to be detected in Zola's descriptions of bedrooms, it would seem to be less that of "alcôve" and "chambre" than that of "alcôve/chambre" and "cellule". Many of Zola's characters occupy bedrooms which, like that of Augustine, seem to contradict Zola's criticism of the Second Empire as a society in search of gratification. Furthermore, although the "cellule" may be seen principally as denoting an ascetic's room, with connotations of the denying of all sensual appetites, the polarisation around the word also holds interest for connotations of the cell as unit in an organism, and the cell as place of confinement.

Though, in Le Ventre de Paris, the cell-like bedroom is associated with a naïve and virginal girl before being occupied by a man of a similar cast, it must not be assumed that such a pattern is immutable in other novels. It must, for example, be admitted that very few of the young girls in Zola's

series occupy cell-like rooms. Virginal they may be, but often they are members of comfortable bourgeois families. Asides about the rooms of Angèle Campardon ("toute blanche ... d'une tristesse de tombe" [Pot-Bouille RM III p9]) and Geneviève Baudu ("une petite chambre où tombait une clarté livide" [Au Bonheur des Dames RM III p 737]) seem to indicate spartan conditions, and, significantly, Zola describes them no further. Certainly, the rooms of Pauline Quenu and Cécile Grégoire reflect the comfort their occupants would expect, as does, though with reservations to be examined later, that of Angélique in Le Rêve. Pauline, in La Joie de Vivre [RM III p 831] occupies "un lit de fer", its austerity tempered by the "rideaux de mousseline" surrounding it. We are not told that the bed is narrow like Augustine's, and though the furnishings of the rest of the room are listed summarily ("une table, une commode et trois chaises"), the superfluity of chairs gives some hint of luxury. This is clearly not a poor household, Pauline is no Catherine Maheu or Lalie Bijard. We note, too, the wallpaper, "à fond écru, semé de fleurs bleues". This colour scheme reappears in the room of Cécile Grégoire [Germinal RM III p 1196], "tendue de soie bleue, garnie de meubles laqués, blancs à filets bleus". This, we are told, is "un caprice d'enfant gâtée", and the bedroom is "la seule luxueuse de la maison". Like Pauline, Cécile sleeps beneath curtains, "dans les blanches vagues du lit". Again, the bed attracts no comment for its narrowness and the brief evocation of the room evidently attempts to stir the reader to a pre-judgement of its occupant, besides providing another example of the pleasure afforded by comfort.

It would appear, then, that no clear link can be found between virginal girls and cell-bedrooms. Further details of Augustine's room in Le Ventre de Paris stress its relationship to its new occupant, Florent. Zola provides details of its utilitarian, undisturbing furnishings and decoration ("une méchante table de bois blanc ... la planche qui servait de toilette ... l'étroit lit de fer, [les] deux chaises de paille, [le] papier peint, d'un

gris effacé" [RM I pp 712-13], but insisting far more on the personal belongings left by Augustine, "des choses tendres et niaises de femme", which permit the reader to confirm Zola's view of the girl's character as that of "[une] grosse fille puérile". More interesting is the reaction of Florent, who senses no threat to his timidity and unworldliness, other than the eyes which watch from a photograph as he undresses - a detail emphasising his inhibited nature. In fact, Florent finds in Augustine's room, which he feels might be that of his sister, a mirror of his own naïveté: "cela le rafraîchissait; le ramenait à des rêves de jeunesse".

This room is destined to be radically changed by Florent, but its original state, a girl's room where an idealistic though ineffectual man feels at ease, leads to a consideration of similar rooms occupied by men, yet suggestive of a feminine nature. Goujet, the massive, virile-looking forge worker of L'Assommoir, occupies a room which contains unexpected elements. The initial comment prepares the reader: "C'était gentil et blanc comme dans la chambre d'une fille" [RM II p 473]. We note the association of "blanc" with "fille", but also infer from the traditional linking of white with purity that Goujet is a virgin - a suspicion later confirmed by the plot. Zola goes on to note "un petit lit de fer garni de rideaux de mousseline", unexpected to say the least, and perhaps by its very incongruity, implausible. A suspicion of cliché may be read into the "petit lit", but there is too the suggestion of a latent effeminacy which Goujet's relationships, both with Gervaise and Coupeau, proceed to explore. We may see, too, in the feminised "petit lit" for this "colosse", the dominating influence of Mme Goujet as castrating mother, and note that even after her death, many years later, the son, who, not implausibly, keeps her room as a shrine, also maintains the appearance of his own into what must be his middle age. Zola's phrase is now [ibid p 775] "une chambre de pensionnaire", emphasising the incongruity of years as well as of sex.

Whereas Augustine's room revealed its original owner's nature by "des choses tendres et niaises de femme", Goujet expresses his personality through his additions to the room. Zola notes firstly, "une étroite bibliothèque, pendue au mur", but the distinguishing feature of Goujet's room is

"des images, du haut en bas, des bonshommes découpés, des gravures coloriées fixées à l'aide de quatre clous, des portraits de toutes sortes de personnages, détachés des journaux illustrés".

[ibid p 473-4]

Twenty years later, "les images découpées s'étaient encore étalées et montaient jusqu'au plafond" [ibid p 775]. The plot reveals that Goujet is literate and interested in politics, but the fixation on illustrations, on non-verbal materials, which ramify rather than dwindle as their owner reaches what should be maturity, sends the reader back to the "étroite bibliothèque" and to its hint of Goujet's inadequacy as autodidact, as the rest of the bedroom hints at his insufficiency as a lover.

Similar features may be noted in the rooms of Silvère Mouret in La Fortune des Rougon and Sigismond Busch in L'Argent. Both, like Goujet, have intellectual aspirations and are chaste - for, though Silvère awakens to love, this remains unconsummated. Indeed, in his relationship with Miette, Silvère has an adolescent shyness which recurs in the adult Goujet's reactions to Gervaise. More significantly, the room he occupies shows that his energies are canalised into idealism, in this case, his enthusiasm for the republican cause. The room is small, mean, "il y avait juste la place d'un lit de sangle" [RM I p 139], but Silvère

"avait dû imaginer tout un système de planches, montant jusqu'au plafond, pour garder auprès de lui ses chers volumes dépareillés, achetés sou à sou dans la boutique d'un fripier du voisinage".

[ibid]

Again, the description implies an attitude on the part of the author. The ramshackle shelving has been 'invented' by Silvère, it forms a "système", but the books it holds are "dépareillés", incomplete sets. We are invited to admire Silvère's effort to understand politics, but also we are to recognise

his limitations.

The chaste but sexually alert Silvère occupies a room with no feminine connotations, but Sigismond Busch joins the company of Florent and Goujet, with his "pièce tapissée d'un papier pâle à fleurettes bleues" [RM V p 40]. This recalls the blue colour scheme of Cécile Grégoire, and, more directly, the blue flowers on Pauline Quenu's wallpaper. Pauline shares Sigismond's idealism but the connotation of the phrase "fleur bleue" in French, denoting unworldly innocence, applies far more to Sigismond than to Pauline. Zola detects in his room "une gaîté de jeunesse, un rire de fraîcheur ingénue", underlined by the light pouring into the room and by the pale, unpainted deal furniture. Besides the ascetic "petit lit de fer dans un coin", not intended to be shared, we note "des planches à peine rabotées ... chargées de livres, de brochures, de papiers de toutes sortes". Again, in what we may now view as a code behind the objects themselves, the improvised shelving suggests a self-taught mind, certainly one for which the niceties of presentation count for less than the contents, which Zola indicates more precisely here than in similar descriptions in earlier novels. The tools of Sigismond's activity are those of the present day, in contrast to Silvère's old books and Goujet's coloured pictures. Equally significant is the symbolism of the room's situation, high above and looking down on the financial realities of transactions in the Bourse below, but reached only through the office in which Sigismond's brother deals in the sordid business which provides a livelihood for them both.

In all three cases, attention is diverted from the room's function as a bedroom towards its role as a study area. The inadequacies of Silvère's and Goujet's intellectual aspirations are paralleled by Sigismond's inability to see that his understanding of wealth in the abstract is made possible only by his brother's acceptance of the sordid realities of life. These young, chaste, aspiring occupants of the "cellule" bedroom offer an outline of the

figure who recurs several times in Zola's fiction; the mature man whose strength lies in his ascetic way of life. Moreover, Silvère, Sigismond and (though to a lesser degree) Goujet, are all concerned with the politics and economics of their society. They echo on a small scale those larger figures, such as Eugène Rougon, for whom power represents a form of gratification.

Eugène, indeed, is so absorbed by the goal of political power, that self-control has become for him a rule of life. Zola offers no description of his bedroom, and Eugène's one lapse into lust occurs in a stable. The one bedroom he is shown to be occupying is a guest room at the palace of Compiègne.

However, other men of determined ambition do reveal their ascetic qualities by their bedrooms. Prominent among these is the Abbé Faujas in La Conquête de Plassans, living in "un demi-jour de cellule murée" [RM I p 926]. Zola notes the chill of the room, and shows

"le lit de fer, sans rideaux, aux draps si bien tendus qu'on eût dit un banc de pierre blanche posé dans un coin".

[ibid]

This bench becomes later "une pierre tombale" [ibid p 1197] but the tightly-made bed, in conjunction with the extreme neatness and bareness of the room, bespeaks a rigid self-control and a self-denial untempered by the sunniness of Sigismond's nature.

Dedication, rather than ambition, is the keynote of Pascal Rougon's character, but Zola's description of his bedroom [Le Docteur Pascal RM V p 1039] ranges him amongst those ascetic and enquiring characters already considered. Like them, he occupies "un petit lit de fer sans rideaux" and stores in his room the emblems of his calling, "sur la table, sur des planches, le long des murs", but, instead of papers or books, Pascal displays "toute une alchimie, des mortiers, des fourneaux, des machines, des trouses". Zola's plan

banishes papers to the great cupboard which plays so prominent a part in the organisation of Le Docteur Pascal. The item which most distinguishes Pascal's room is "un appareil à douches dans un coin". A doctor's preoccupation with hygiene might suffice to explain this addition, were it not that Zola also tells us that the room is "une grande pièce que son exposition au nord rendait froide". We are thus invited to see, in the chill of the room and the cold showers to which Pascal seems addicted, the outer signs of a cold but vigorous nature. Pascal is not destined to remain chaste however, and as his life gravitates towards Clotilde's room, his own bedroom becomes "glacée, haute, vide, noire" [ibid p 1173]. Three of those epithets are already implied by the earlier description, even "noire" possibly being an extension of the "exposition au nord". When brought together, they hammer home the emotional deprivation of Pascal's earlier life. Even the associations of the added word "haute", suggestive possibly of Pascal's intellectual life, are altered by the juxtaposition with "vide".

There remain two male characters who occupy cell-like rooms, but for them the original bareness of the room has become overlaid by clutter and disorder, so that the cell-nucleus has almost disappeared. Both Claude Lantier in L'Oeuvre and Lazare Chanteau in La Joie de Vivre are failures in life: Claude despite his talent or near genius, Lazare by lack of application and dedication. Each in his own way is ambitious and enquiring, but, in both men, the aspiring mind lacks that ascetic quality, that refusal of personal gratification which marks L'Abbé Faujas and Sigismond Busch; only Pascal Rougon successfully combines the pursuit of knowledge with sexual fulfilment.

In both cases, the young man's bedroom is seen through a woman's eyes. Although Pauline in La Joie de Vivre urges her cousin Lazare to complete his various abandoned projects, she is nonetheless a disturbing influence on an already fragile ambition; and Christine Hallegrain, with the best of intentions, finally imprisons Claude's genius in a domestic trap which he lacks the ruthless drive to overcome.

As Christine sees Claude's studio for the first time, we note through her eyes the nucleus of the cell-bedroom, 'le lit, la petite table de toilette et le divan', [L'Oeuvre RM IV p 22], but proceed to the bigger table, 'encombrée de pinceaux, de couleurs, d'assiettes sales, d'une lampe à esprit-de-vin', together with unwashed saucepans. This disorder extends to other furniture. 'Des chaises dépaillées se débandaient, parmi des chevalets boiteux' [ibid]. "Dépaillées ... se débandaient ... boiteux" are words of disapproval, whether from Zola or from Christine. We are far from the tomb-like room of Faujas or even the orderly display of Pascal's equipment. Claude has allowed his professional life ("pinceaux ... couleurs") to be dangerously invaded by the personal ("assiettes sales ... une lampe ... une casserole barbouillée").

Zola shows that Christine's arrival puts an end to this disorder, but also to the chastity which he seems to assume to be a vital ingredient in the success of an ambitious man. The author's attitude to Christine's housewifery seems ambiguous. On the one hand, he frequently shows approval of neatness in women - Gervaise, Lalie Bijard, Denise, Clotilde and Pauline Quenu are obvious examples. Yet Christine's intervention could be interpreted as interference, the castrating female at work to circumscribe the free-ranging genius of the artist. Certainly, studios later occupied by Claude and Christine are never shown in disorder, and we may be invited to see Christine's influence as operating against the general pattern, and disorder as a necessary element in the flowering of an artist's talent.

Certainly, if disorder were a sure sign of talent, Lazare Chanteau would be the equal of Claude Lantier, and his cousin's faith in him would be justified. At the heart of the "fouillis de grenier" of his bedroom lies something of the ascesis familiar from other examples quoted. "Un petit lit de fer se perdait dans un coin, derrière un paravent crevé", [ibid p 838] but this last word signals the danger of disorder. The books, reminding us of the rooms of Goujet, Silvère and Sigismond, "sur des planches de bois blanc", total "un millier de volumes, des livres classiques, des ouvrages dépareillés, découverts au fond d'un grenier" [ibid]. We recall Silvère's random collection, and are prepared for a similar lack of dedication in the list of heteroclite objects which remain as witnesses to various past and uncompleted enthusiasms of the occupant.

All the examples so far quoted show the bedroom as a place from which "la jouissance" is banished. All have been occupied by men of some ambition and intellectual pretensions, who are, in addition, sexually timid or ascetic. It might be contended that the case of Octave Mouret allies ambition to sexual enterprise, and that the pattern ought, at least in part, to be re-examined. In fact, Zola offers only the merest glimpse of Octave's room in Pot-Bouille, and none at all in Au Bonheur des Dames. In refusing a lengthy description of the bachelor flat, Zola is establishing the particular climate of Pot-Bouille, a novel unusual⁽¹⁾ in the Rougon-Macquart series for the paucity of material related to domestic scenes, despite the confinement of the action to the apartment house. What detail there is in Zola's brief description of Octave's rooms has elements already encountered:

"La chambre, carrée, assez grande, tapissée d'un papier gris à fleurs bleues, était meublée très simplement. Près de l'alcôve se trouvait ménagé un cabinet de toilette, juste la place de se laver les mains". [Pot-Bouille RM III p 7]

(1) Only La Conquête de Plassans rivals Pot-Bouille in the lack of descriptions of domestic rooms.

Here, the "fleurs bleues" have no reference to the occupant's innocence, but the presence of an alcove, rather than a small bed, suggests erotic potential, though, as already noted, the arrangement is practical too.

It remains to mention, among ascetic bedrooms, the few occupied by women, and to note that these have no connotations of ambition. They are in several cases the rooms of older, disappointed or frustrated women. Thus, Tante Dide in La Fortune des Rougon sleeps in "une étroite pièce meublée d'un lit de fer et d'une chaise" [RM I p 139]. Martine, Pascal's old servant, has "un lit monacal, garni de rideaux blancs" [Le Docteur Pascal RM V p 940], whilst the distressed gentlewomen of the Beauvilliers family in L'Argent illustrate the use of the alcove, which allows the beds to be hidden and the room used as a salon - "une grande chambre nue, d'une misère digne et triste" [RM V pp 366-7]. Zola's choice of this arrangement is explained when Alice de Beauvilliers, recovering from a rapist's attack, is able, without being seen, to hear Busch's threats to her mother. These very few examples, with their lack of information about the lives of the characters, throw into sharper relief the cluster of male characters whose bedrooms Zola describes as cells, and indicate the division, in the author's groupings of characters, between men, capable of aspirations, albeit towards power, and women, whose bedrooms are far more likely to be erotic in their associations.

The 'cell', however, has meanings beyond the merely ascetic, with connotations of the hive and of the prison. The latter definition elicits few examples from the novels under review, and indeed, none at all of actual prison cells, astonishing, given the high level of criminality among the characters. In L'Argent Ch. XII, for example, no picture is vouchsafed of the cells visited by Mme Caroline. The asylum, however, is described more than once, though Zola passes over in silence the cell of François Mouret in La Conquête de Plassans. Tante Dide's cell at les Tulettes in Le Docteur Pascal is indistinguishable from a normal bedroom, with only the "papier clair" even slightly characterised [RM V p 973]. Similar detachment marks Zola's description of the padded cell occupied by Coupeau in L'Assommoir, "matelassée

du haut en bas", and with only the arrangement of mattresses and bolsters to report on [RM II p 782].

Both of these literal cells are also metaphorical cells, set in a larger complex of rooms. Their bareness suggests minimal comfort, associated with uniformity, and it is not surprising to find similar spartan conditions in other communal sleeping arrangements.

Closest of all communities to actual confinement is surely the seminary, where the "cellule étroite" of Serge Mouret, "une case meublée d'un lit, d'une table et d'une chaise" has as its only remarkable feature among "une cinquantaine de réduits pareils", that it is "séparée des cases voisines par des planches mal jointes" [La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret RM I pp 1300-1301].

The precarious privacy afforded by the "case" rather than the dormitory, its presumed alternative, is exercised only when Serge passes to a higher level of study, and accedes to a "cellule de théologien ... plus grande, avec un fauteuil, une toilette, une bibliothèque, heureuse chambre emplie des rêves de sa foi " [ibid p 1301]. Borie⁽¹⁾ traces the progression of Zola's attitudes towards the "chambre heureuse" of Le Docteur Pascal, but we here find a striking anticipation of his phrase. Serge's room is "heureuse" because it favours his "rêves" - not, we note, his ambitions; he is content with his lot as a member of a community, and acts as a counterweight to the scheming churchman Faujas of the novel immediately preceding, La Conquête de Plassans.

This progression from absolute austerity to a relative comfort has its parallel in Denise Baudu's experience of the living quarters of the store in Au Bonheur des Dames. As a lowly shopgirl, she knows the bleakness of the employee's cubicle.

(1) op.cit.

"C'était une étroite cellule mansardée, ouvrant sur le toit par une fenêtre à tabatière, meublée d'un petit lit, d'une armoire de noyer, d'une table de toilette et de deux chaises. Vingt chambres pareilles s'alignaient le long d'un couloir de couvent, peint en jaune".

[RM III p 472]

Recalling Zola's use of yellow as a symbol of jealousy in *Félicité Rougon's* salon in La Fortune des Rougon, it is possible to see in this detail of the "couloir de couvent" a comment on the soured relationships which preclude true friendships among the backbiting and the competitive shopgirls, and the bleak, factual list of the room's contents anticipates Zola's later mention of it as having "cette nudité d'hôtel garni" [ibid p 501].

Denise progresses, as Serge had done, to "une des plus grandes chambres", whose basic furnishings are not listed, but to which she adds personal touches: "un édredon rouge recouvert d'un voile de guipure, un petit tapis devant l'armoire, deux vases de verre bleu sur la toilette" [ibid p 647]. Red often indicates an erotic potential, but here the colour on the bed is, literally overlaid with a bridal lace, and the blue of the vases presents an alternative view of Denise as "fleur bleue". Her promotion makes her "riche à présent" enabling her to escape from the confining bleakness of the worst aspects of communal living to join in some respects the daughters of the middle class, such as Pauline Quenu. Denise, however, sees in the communal life a vision of the future, the ideal phalanstery from which the employees will have neither the need nor the wish to escape.

In fact, the cell-bedrooms are susceptible of improvement, since they are private, though only barely so. Zola describes a dormitory only once, that of the railway employees in La Bête Humaine. In Paris, Jacques Lantier has a room close to his work, where he lives "enfermé comme un moine au fond de sa cellule" [RM IV p 1045], but at le Havre, he occupies a bed "au fond d'un

petit dortoir badigeonné de jaune" [ibid p 1154], where the beds surround basic washing and eating facilities. Zola notes that the company has arranged for teams of men to sleep in proximity so as to strengthen their sense of partnership [ibid p 1150]. This underlines the conclusion that the keynote of all these "cellules" of communal living, even if they are not dormitories, is the suppression of individuality, including the erotic drive. Jacques - admittedly an extreme case of erotic impulses - is specifically shown in his Paris room, struggling against his sexual/homicidal urges, "usant la révolte de ses désirs à force de sommeil, dormant sur le ventre" [ibid p 1045]. They are rooms in which sexual activity would be difficult if not impossible - only Jacques is shown assailed by desire in one of these narrow beds - and in which energies, at least those of many of the men - are canalised towards power, the alternative form of "la jouissance". Nevertheless, by their frequent appearance in the series of novels, these evocations of chaste bedrooms throw into relief their opposite, the bedrooms which are havens of pleasure.

The bedroom is the most private of domestic rooms, and affords opportunities for the individual's most personal expression of fancies and caprices in décor. Zola seizes on this pretext for flights of fancy which are both related to the scheme of the individual novel, and deeply personal to the author, as a consideration of descriptions in such novels as La Curée and Nana will show. It is also in these more elaborate settings that elements of the description other than the décor itself will contribute to Zola's evocation of a pleasure-seeking society - details of the characters, their clothing, their activities for example. It will also be relevant to consider some rooms outside the domestic setting, such as the "cabinet particulier" at the Café Riche in La Curée.

Before embarking on a detailed analysis of such rooms, three points must be made. The first is that bedrooms are by no means exclusively erotic, being often the scene of births, deaths and illnesses.

To list examples of these would be merely to document the fact that the bedroom plays a part in the normal cycle of life. More sporadically, and certainly more dramatically than the everyday dining-room, the bedroom can unite the family as lives begin, falter or end. To a large extent, Zola's use of the bedroom reflects the tradition of the nineteenth-century novel in which sickroom and deathbed scenes abound. Only in his frank treatment of births (to Louise Chanteau, Lise Buteau and Adèle, for example) does Zola truly extend the range of the novelist, and even here, the event rather than the setting is the focus of his attention.

Secondly as they are primarily intended for the housing of sleepers, sleep is the first of the pleasures of the bedroom. Rarely, however, are characters shown asleep in bed, and of these, only Jean Macquart, in a passage from La Débâcle to be discussed, can be said to plunge sensuously into sleep. The Quenus may use "un lit fait pour dormir" but Zola presents only their quarrel, and Quenu's reflections. Sleep is often depicted only as it is interrupted, as when Albine wakes Serge, or Catherine Maheu her working family. Zola's picture of the sleeping Cécile Grégoire in Germinal has more interest as a contrast to Catherine's cheerless awakening than in its evocation of sensuality. This element is present, however, in Zola's notation of Cécile's "bras nu" and "gorge déjà lourde" revealed by the slipping covers. [RM III p 1196]. Hélène Grandjean, in the opening scene of Une Page d'Amour, is discovered asleep, "les mains croisées, dans sa tranquille attitude de mère et de veuve", but even here, Zola notes "la ligne chaste de sa gorge" [RM II p 801].

A more developed picture of a sleeping woman is presented by Séverine, who

"cédait à un sommeil invincible, comme foudroyée", after her confession to Jacques [La Bête Humaine RM IV p 1205]. She risks becoming his victim, as Zola stresses both the innocence and the sensuality of her sleep.

"Elle dormait très calme, avec un souffle d'enfant, dans sa grosse fatigue. Ses lourds cheveux noirs, dénoués, lui faisaient un oreiller sombre, coulant jusqu'aux épaules; et sous le menton, entre les boucles, on apercevait sa gorge, d'une délicatesse de lait, à peine rosée".

[ibid p 1207]

For Jacques, the combination of "sa nudité et son désordre" [ibid p 1209] would irresistibly draw him to attack her, and though he is clearly a pathological case, we may be surprised to note the role of "désordre" in provoking his malaise; it is a word which will become familiar in the course of the present study. It should be noted that the frontier between sleep and sexuality becomes very imprecise in La Bête Humaine; another reference evokes Jacques "usant la révolte de ses désirs à force de sommeil, dormant sur le ventre" [ibid p 1405], which may be seen as an indirect allusion to masturbation.

Thirdly, it should be noted that Zola seems unwilling to penetrate beyond the bedroom door in one or two cases. Leaving aside the curious lack of description of any rooms in two largely domestic novels (La Conquête de Plassans and Pot-Bouille as already noted), there remains Zola's refusal to show the bedrooms of the Huberts in Le Rêve and the Sandoz in L'Oeuvre. Borie postulates convincingly that for Zola, the bedroom is an awesome place, one that has to be "exorcised" in the progression towards the "chambre heureuse" of Clotilde in Le Docteur Pascal, and beyond, to novels such as Fécondité. No doubt, the fruitful liaison with Jeanne Rozerot was instrumental in bringing about this transformation, but we note that of all the married couples of the Rougon-Macquart, only two can convincingly be argued as happy and sexually active in their mature years: the Huberts and the Sandoz. Indeed, Hubertine is pregnant as Le Rêve ends. Zola's portrayal of himself and Mme Zola as the Sandoz couple will account in part for a refusal to violate their privacy, but we note a similar taboo on the room of Sandoz' mother, which recalls Zola's devotion to his own mother, and underlines Borie's comments on Oedipal conflicts

in Zola's character. It appears that, for Zola, the bedroom is so personal a reflection of the lives of its occupants that he feels unable to undertake even a listing of the contents of the room of that awesome unit, the mature and sexually fulfilled married couple.

One of the most interesting and thematically-rich descriptions of bedrooms in Zola's works is that of Clorinde Balbi's room in Son Excellence Eugène Rougon. Richard B. Grant in his study of this novel⁽¹⁾, devotes considerable space to a confrontation of the décors of Clorinde's life with those of the Countess of Castiglione, pointing out the factual basis of such details as Clorinde's caprice of an all-black bedroom. At the same time, Grant shows that some of the Countess's fantasies were acted out only after the publication of Zola's novel, and indicates that Zola omits the element of decay surrounding La Castiglione in her later years. Interesting though this study is as a commentary on the interplay between life and art, it is the novel itself that must be consulted primarily, and here, many features of Zola's evocation of Clorinde's various rooms are at once distinctive, and suggestive of other descriptions in the Rougon-Macquart series.

Clorinde differs from most of Zola's heroines in her use of her attractiveness as a political ploy, fighting a man's battle with women's weapons. Zola never explicitly attributes to her a sexual relationship (even her marriage is a union of convenience) before her liaison with the Emperor, when, in a passage already quoted, he rapidly evokes her amorous progression from stableboy to potentate. In its reflection of her role as an intriguer, Clorinde's room is not that of a "grande amoureuse" such as Nana, but the teasing use she makes of her physical charms, her caprices and fantasies range her alongside Nana as a "mangeuse d'hommes".

(1) R. B. Grant: Zola's "Son Excellence Eugène Rougon": An Historical and Critical Study. Duke University Press, Durham, North Carolina 1960.

Descriptions of Clorinde's bedroom, either seen by other characters or evoked by them in conversation, e.g. La Rouquette's description, (RM II p23) occur several times in Son Excellence Eugène Rougon, extending occasionally to include the "cabinet de toilette", so frequent an appendage of the bedrooms of the rich that consideration of it must be included in any survey. It will be useful to consider in turn different aspects of Clorinde's apartment, and to link each of these with similar characteristics found in descriptions of other bedrooms or "cabinets de toilette" in the Rougon-Macquart series.

The most striking characteristic of Clorinde Balbi's private rooms is their extreme disorder. Mario Maurin, in his article on 'Zola's Labyrinths', (1) detects a link in Zola's imagination between labyrinthine disorder and a closed, secretive eroticism. Though Clorinde's room is never seen as a place of overt sexual activity, there is a strongly voyeuristic element in the first description of her apartment as Clorinde poses almost naked for a study of Diana. In a rapid sketch of the bedroom, Zola establishes a labyrinthine décor by such details as a screen, a bowl of water on the floor [RM II p 62]. These in themselves are less than suggestive, but Zola links them with other elements. The screen "devant le lit, en cachait les couvertures pendantes" [ibid] and is festooned with "les jupons de la veille[...] tout crottés par le bas"; the water in the bowl has evidently been used, and a cat sleeps on a pile of clothes. The display of an intimate scene involving a bed, discarded clothes and dirty water - are found in a number of other descriptions, usually of the rooms of women. The additional detail of the cat suggests both sensuality and the "laisser-aller" which Borie identifies as a key element in the world of Zola's novels.

Thus, the first meeting between Dr Deberle and Hélène Grandjean, soon to be lovers, takes place at night, by the sickbed of Helene's daughter, in strictly professional circumstances. But even here, Zola contrives "le désordre de la chambre, où les meubles étaient culbutés" [Une Page d'Amour RM II p 807].

(1) M. Maurin: "Zola's Labyrinths" in Yale French Studies, Vol 42 (1969) pp 89-104.

"Les vêtements qu'Hélène jetait sur le dossier d'un fauteuil en se couchant, avaient glissé à terre et barraient le tapis. Le docteur, ayant marché sur un corset, le ramassa pour ne plus le rencontrer sous ses pieds. Une odeur de verveine montait du lit défait et de ces linges épars. C'était toute l'intimité d'une femme violemment étalée"

[ibid]

Zola shows a distinct complaisance in details which in other circumstances, might be erotic (undergarments, perfume from the bed), signalling to the reader the equivocal situation of the doctor in society, alone empowered, although an outsider, to see the most intimate aspects of his patients' lives and trusted not to take advantage of them. The choice of the adverb "violemment" indicates, however, a threat inherent in even the best-motivated intrusion into a woman's sanctuary.

Only the whore allows such intimate glimpses of her privacy, (though the willingness of actresses in Nana to receive visitors in their dressing-rooms indicates the traditional loose morality of the stage), and accordingly, we are shown Satin's room, as seen by her friend, Nana:

"au milieu du lit défait, des cuvettes qui traînaient par terre, des jupons crottés de la veille, tachant de boue les fauteuils".

[Nana RM II p 1297]

The similarity of Zola's phrases here, and of those which describe Clorinde's room is undeniable, inviting us to see Clorinde as a Satin, whose intelligence allows her to be sluttish at a higher social level.

In further echoes of Clorinde, Zola specifically ascribes to Satin "une [...] rage d'ordures et de désordre" [ibid], and implies her indifference to the reactions of others.

"A la lampe, l'armoire à glace, la pendule et ce qui restait des rideaux, faisaient encore illusion aux hommes. D'ailleurs, depuis six mois, son propriétaire menaçait de l'expulser. Alors, pour qui aurait-elle entretenu ses meubles?" [ibid]

La Bête Humaine contains a description of a bedroom in disorder and unmistakably associated with an erotic encounter. Mère Victoire's flat, used by Jacques and Séverine for their lovemaking, is seen in half-light as Jacques seeks to dress and escape from his urge to kill Séverine, "s'embarrassant les pieds parmi les jupes restées sur le parquet" [RM IV p 1208]. An unusual element here is the mention of men's attire, as Jacques "ne trouvait plus son pantalon, le toucha à trois reprises avant de savoir qu'il le tenait" [ibid]. Zola specifies that Jacques is "égaré" in the labyrinth of discarded clothes, driven by the urge to kill, for him an erotic activity. Indeed, the examples already quoted of men failing to avoid tangling with female clothes lying on the floor suggest literal walking into a snare, as though the very sight or even presence of a traditional erotic stimulus could determine their destiny as inexorably as Jacques' mania leads him to murder.

Another variation on the theme of disorder, this time with comic rather than menacing resonances, is provided by Claude Lantier's embarrassment when confronted by Christine's scattered clothes, in L'Oeuvre, but the element of misogynistic dread, perceived in Jacques Lantier's behaviour, is present too in his brother's reaction. Despite his own "désordre abominable" [RM IV p 18], Claude is "gêné par le paquet de jupes, glissées à terre".

"Il tournait et retournait maladroitement ces chiffons de femme, s'embarrassait dans le corsage de laine noire, cherchait à quatre pattes les bas, tombés derrière une vieille toile". [ibid]

Claude goes on to discover Christine half-naked in her sleep, a further link with Jacques, whose reaction to such a confrontation (with Flore, or Séverine) is to use a knife on them. His brother's way of "raping" is to use a pencil to sketch Christine, and in doing so, to defuse any sexual menace presented by female nudity. Zola shows other women naked in their rooms - Renée in La Curée [RM I p 572], Nana, [RM II p 1215, p 1271, p 1462] and Baroness Sandorff [L'Argent RM V p 211], and in each case, the erotic element is to the fore. Male nudity is rarely specified, and is seen as either comic as in Florent's embarrassment in front of the photograph in Le Ventre de Paris, or in the sight of the aged Marquis de Chouard in Nana's bed, or bestial in the cases of Jacques of La Bête Humaine or Saccard and his bastard son Victor in L'Argent.

However, Zola occasionally describes a man's bedroom in disorder, evoking each time the animality of sex. Thus, the anonymous "monsieur distingué" of Pot-Bouille provides scope for savage irony on bourgeois hypocrisy as he leaves "un terrible désordre" after occupying his rented room; "un grand lit aux draps arrachés", suggesting double occupancy and violent activity; "une armoire à glace vide où l'on apercevait un reste de homard et des bouteilles entamées", indicating impermanent tenancy, high living and an almost surrealistic eye for comic incongruity on Zola's part, followed by not one, but two "cuvettes sales" left for the concierge to empty, "de son air froid de magistrat retraité" [Pot-Bouille RM III p 252].

A similar picture, this time without any comic elements, confronts M. Hennebeau in his nephew Négrel's room in Germinal. He sees first merely the already familiar elements of an untidy room:

"un grand désordre encomrait la pièce, des vêtements épars, des serviettes mouillées jetées aux dossiers des sièges, le lit béant, un drap arraché, traînant jusque sur le tapis." [RM III p 1430]

The discovery of his wife's smelling-bottle among the sheets is followed by two pages in which Zola analyses Hennebeau's growing certainty of her adultery, and his realisation that the servants must know of it. The line between observed reality and erotic imaginings becomes blurred.

"C'était de leurs soupirs, de leurs haleines confondues, dont s'alourdisait la tiédeur moite de cette chambre; [...] et il retrouvait ainsi la chaleur, l'odeur de la fornication, l'adultère vivant, dans les pots qui traînaient, dans les cuvettes encore pleines, dans le désordre des linges, des meubles, de la pièce entière, empestée de vice." [ibid p 1432]

This passage shows that some features of bedrooms in disorder act as erotic "triggers" to the author himself; the reiteration that disorder can be equated with sexual gratification through the imagination of the onlooker clearly demonstrates the voyeuristic appeal of scenes such as Zola here describes. Hennebeau's mind adds significance to what had at first seemed an unremarkable picture of an unmade bed. Before he leaves the room, he seeks relief by punishing the bed itself, seeing the sheets "comme éreintés eux-mêmes des amours de toute la nuit" [ibid]. These last words reveal the extent of Hennebeau's imaginings - "toute une nuit" has no objective truth - but the whole passage reveals, not so much a mechanistic response by Zola to a list of stimuli, as a perceptive and detailed account of an obsessive state, perhaps revelatory of the author's own sexual responses.

The role of the "cuvette", usually filled with dirty water, sometimes accompanied by soiled towels, seems to hold a special significance for Zola, especially since the presence of a "cabinet de toilette" does not exclude the use of

basins - Clorinde seems to have both. No doubt, the reader is invited to see in the "cuvette" a discreet hint of sexual ablutions, a precursor of the bidet, and it may be noted that Muffat, during his vigil outside Fauchery's flat in Nana, sees a silhouetted figure with a water-jug, which strengthens his belief in his wife's adultery. But an equally strong impression given by the "cuvette", often said to "train^{er}" in the room, is that of disorder, of carelessness, of indifference to the revelation of private habits, typical of Clorinde, and of certain others such as Satin, or, indeed, of Lantier in L'Assommoir, since "l'eau grasse de ses mains emplissait la cuvette" in the room otherwise stripped bare by him [RM II p 402].

Confirmation of this can be seen in the quite different behaviour of Christine in L'Oeuvre, sheltered for the night by Claude Lantier. The painter expects to find disorder behind her screen, but "tout se trouvait rangé, très propre, la cuvette, la serviette, le savon" [RM IV p 32]. Christine's respectability is guaranteed by her emptying of her bowl, but the unmade bed, ~~with~~ its "odeur pure de jeunesse qui montait des linges" [ibid], and the damp towel in which Claude finds "le même étouffement, cette haleine de vierge" [ibid], discreetly convey the girl's femininity, hence her sexual potential.

Clorinde's sluttish bowls of water are strictly superfluous, since she has a "cabinet de toilette" adjoining her bedroom. This feature of the wealthy woman's life-style in Zola's novels deserves consideration, as it is clearly an extension of her bedroom, and potentially even more erotic, since a display of nudity is more likely there. All the more reason, therefore, to be surprised at Clorinde's use of this intimate room as her headquarters.

"Elle centralisait chez elle, dans son cabinet de toilette, où traînaient des cuvettes mal essuyées, toute la politique des cours d'Europe".

[Son Excellence Eugène Rougon
RM II p 297]

This "cabinet de toilette", however, has no sensual connotations whatever, unlike most others evoked by Zola.

La Curée offers two contrasted examples of a private bathroom, the first of which approaches Clorinde's in its lack of erotic glamour. As Renée explores Blanche Muller's "cabinet de toilette," she appraises it as "commun", a décor soiled and damaged, the carpet "criblé" by cigarette burns, the silk wall coverings "tachées de pommade, piquées par des éclaboussures de savon" [RM I p 444]. The listing of these areas of damage, small holes and spots on the expensive surface of the décor, suggests the attitude of Renée as much as the state of the room. Her curiosity about the "demi-monde" quickly turns to fault-finding, in an attempt to explain away the attraction of a Blanche Muller for men of Renée's circle. Blanche herself is, in a sense, "criblée, tachée, piquée" by Renée's need to criticise.

Renée's own "cabinet de toilette", lovingly described by Zola, forms the natural appendage to her bedroom, and is situated between that room and the clinically-ordered wardrobe, almost a stock room, presided over by the maid. The bathroom is a transitional area, and it is perhaps not too fanciful to see the bedroom as skin, the bathroom as flesh and the white wardrobe as bone. Certainly, the whole novel centres on the "stripping" of Renée, physically, financially, and morally, culminating in her vision of Saccard and Maxime intent on denuding her. The suite of rooms reflects the nakedness of Renée in every sense, and the bathroom most of all shows her as physically nude. Zola's fantasy seems to be allowed full rein here, even more than in the bedroom itself, since a cutting from Le Figaro in the "dossier" of La Curée ⁽¹⁾ shows that he used an account of the Princess Metternich's re-styled apartment as an influential source for the details of the bedroom. Zola has woven for the bathroom a fantasy in pink, white and silver, the two latter replacing the pale grey of the bedroom. The beauty-aids

(1) Nouvelles Acquisitions Françaises, Oeuvres d'Emile Zola 18. La Curée II. 10282 (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris). fo. 265 - cutting from Le Figaro

have ivory handles, thus anticipating the white gleam of bone which the clinical whiteness of the wardrobe accentuates. Zola more overtly suggests religious images, the wardrobe having "un recueillement de sacristie" [RM I p 478] (as well as "une propreté d'écurie", implying that Renée is a show-horse for her husband) ⁽¹⁾, and the bath itself, shell-shaped, evokes the birth of Venus. The tent-like ceiling of the bathroom also suggests legend: "une tente de féerie, dressée en plein rêve pour quelque guerrière amoureuse" [ibid]. This image of the warrior-maid recalls the numerous semi-masculine attributes of Renée - her eyeglass, her military-style clothes - and implies much about her relations with the effeminate Maxime.

The leading image, however, remains that of flesh. The perfume lingering after the bath is "une odeur de chair fraîche et mouillée" [ibid p 480], which may be literal, but other details fantasise the pink hangings as skin "sous laquelle on croyait voir couler du sang rose" [ibid], and which resembles "des rondeurs de chair, des rondeurs d'épaules et de seins" [ibid], "la peau neigeuse d'une enfant ou la peau chaude d'une femme" [ibid]. All is summarised by Zola as "une grande nudité" in which the physical presence of Renée merely adds "un peu de rose à toute cette chair rose de la pièce". We are not surprised, on re-reading the earlier description of the rest of this apparently spacious room, ⁽²⁾, to note that only the silver and ivory components are allowed a hard outline, since "les pieds [de la table] disparaissaient sous des volants de mousseline et de guipure", and that even the glassware, "les verres, les vases, la cuvette, étaient en vieux bohème veiné de rose et de blanc" [ibid p 479].

(1) Stables have other connotations than cleanliness. We note in La Curée that the homosexual valet Baptiste frequents the stables ostensibly to see the horses, but in fact to debauch the stableboys; and that Eugène Rougon succumbs to lust for Clorinde in a stable. The stables suggest the "alcôve" by their form, and in his description of them, in Son Excellence Eugène Rougon, Zola notes that the cleanliness does not banish the strong smell, or the "chaleur humide de baignoire" [RM II p 166].

(2) ibid fo. 272. Plan du 1er étage de la maison Saccard. This shows the "cabinet de toilette" to be as large as the bedroom, and considerably larger than the "petit salon" or ante-room to Renée's suite.

Thus is the image of flesh, with veins and blood, maintained.

Nana enjoys more than one "cabinet de toilette". The first, in her flat on the boulevard Haussmann, "la pièce la plus élégante de l'appartement" [Nana RM II p 1137], is evidently used for receiving guests, since it contains "une chaise longue, et des fauteuils de satin bleu" [ibid]. Zola concentrates his evocation of the room on its perfumes, as, "dans l'air moite, dans la fadeur exhalée des cuvettes", he notes not only the presence of many flowers, tributes to Nana's début performance, but also "par instants, une odeur plus aiguë", that of patchouli [ibid]. No mention is made of the fittings other than the "cuvettes", but the room is the setting for Nana's first encounter with Muffat and Chouard, her future lovers. The choice of the "cabinet de toilette" for this meeting seems to be determined by the sensuality of the damp and perfumed air as the setting corresponding to the two men's idea of an erotic presence. Similarly, the bathroom of the house on the Avenue de Villiers is seen as the heart of the house, since Nana's penetrating perfume emanates from this source. In its furnishings, Nana's second bathroom approaches Renée's. The bath is described as a "vasque", as is Renée's bath, and, like Renée, Nana favours ivory, silver and cut-glass accessories. Unlike Renée, Nana chooses hard surfaces for the room, a "cabinet de toilette tout en marbre et en glace" [ibid p 1348], and the colour of the bath is white, not pink. The comparison of the two underlines the vulnerability of Renée and the hardness of Nana, who is rarely associated with soft furnishings. The ever-open door of the bathroom recalls the public side of Clorinde's apartments, as well as Renée's access to Blanche Muller's rooms, and underlines the tension between intimacy and flaunting which gives to these "cabinets de toilette" an ambivalent and disturbing role.

Thus, we are not surprised that Henriette Desforges, Octave's mistress in Au Bonheur des Dames, should stage her confrontation with Denise in her "cabinet de toilette", using Octave's evident familiarity with the room as proof of her hold over him. This room too is spacious, "assez vaste", its furnishings

merely listed, but with the unusual feature of "deux becs de gaz, dont les bras nickelés s'allongeaient à droite et à gauche de l'armoire" [RM III p 692]. The choice of this detail proves capital, since the sound of the gas, added to the unreality of the mirror effects and to the stale perfume in the air, clearly labels this room as dead, the heartland of a spent force.

"un des becs de gaz sifflait, et dans l'air étouffé et moite de la pièce, on n'entendait plus que ce souffle ardent. Les glaces de l'armoire reflétaient de larges pans de clarté vive sur les tentures de soie rouge, où dansaient les ombres des deux flammes. Un flacon de verveine qu'on avait oublié de reboucher exhalait une odeur vague et perdue de bouquet qui se fane". [ibid pp 693-4]

Perfume is the common factor of all the foregoing descriptions, linked evidently to the sensuality which Zola associates with the "cabinet de toilette". Surprisingly enough, Zola's clearest statement of this sensuality occurs in his evocation of a man's "cabinet de toilette"; that of the mayor of Plassans in La Fortune des Rougon. Zola demonstrates how this place of confinement gradually works upon the imagination and reasoning of Antoine Macquart, its luxury becoming a crucial factor in his desertion of the socialist cause. After yielding to the "temptation" of this display of sybaritic luxuries, Macquart finds "sa plus grande jouissance" in the mayor's towels, "souples, épaisses". [RM I p 272].

"Il y plongeait sa figure humide, y respira béatement toutes les senteurs de la richesse. Puis, quand il fut pommadé, quand il sentit bon de la tête aux pieds, il revint s'étendre sur le divan, rajeuni, porté aux idées conciliantes. Il éprouva un mépris encore plus grand pour la République, depuis qu'il avait mis le nez dans les fioles de M. Garçonnet". [ibid]

This passage clearly indicates not only the influence of surroundings on conduct, but also Zola's typical substitution of description for analysis. It sums up, in the first appearance of a "cabinet de toilette" in Zola's novels, the values which he attributes to the gratification of sensuality, represented by such a luxury.

Further examination of Clorinde Balbi's room in Son Excellence Eugène Rougon

shows that the adventuress admits into her room a variety of objects more suited to the office than to the boudoir. Already, her "cabinet de toilette" is

"meubl^é d'un grand bureau d'acajou déverni, appuyé au mur, d'un fauteuil de cuir et d'un cartonnier. Des paperasses traînaient sous une épaisse couche de poussière. On se serait cru chez un huissier louche".

[RM II p 122]

These objects themselves sport unlikely appendages:

"au milieu des paperasses du bureau, un corset qui traînait, usé, craqué à la taille. Il y avait encore un savon dans la coquille de l'encrier, et des bouts de satin bleu à terre..."

[ibid p 126]

The disorder is not unexpected, given earlier descriptions of the bedroom itself, but the mingling of personal, even intimate objects with the trappings of business gives the scene an almost surreal piquancy. The incongruity of these juxtapositions emphasises Clorinde's use of her femininity as a business asset, and may serve as the template for several other descriptions of intrusive furniture in bedrooms. Sidonie Rougon, for example, lets the pianos she sells overflow into her bedroom;

"Il y avait aussi des pianos jusque dans sa chambre très coquettement ornée, et qui jurait avec le pêle-mêle boutiquier des deux autres pièces".

[La Curée RM I p 369]

Sidonie can be seen as a Clorinde déclassée, her commerce being a front for less reputable activities as an entremetteuse. Like Clorinde, she combines business with sex, though, unlike Clorinde, Sidonie's own charms are minimal.

In Le Ventre de Paris, the incongruity of the old market cart used as a bed for Marjolin and Cadine deserves mention; "un large berceau, encore tout odorant des légumes qu'elle y avait tenu frais sous des linges mouillés" [RM I p 763]. The two children are clearly to be considered as "market-produce". More interesting in the same novel, is the presence of the

massive desk, oddly kept in the Quenus' bedroom. Zola describes first of all the bed itself as "surprenant", so loaded with "ses quatre matelas, ses quatre oreillers, ses épaisseurs de couvertures, son édredon", that it becomes an "assoupissement ventru", "un lit fait pour dormir" [ibid p 656]. Specifically excluding sexual pleasure, Zola insists on the enjoyment of sleep in a bed which grotesquely recalls the pleasure of eating. But he does note "ce qui étonnait, au milieu de ces choses neuves, c'était, adossé au mur de droite, un grand secrétaire" [ibid]. Like the bed, the desk sums up certain bourgeois tenets. Its position, to the right, is surely no coincidence, and its age, ("noir de vieillesse") suggests respectability and a solid foundation to the family's fortune, despite the newness of the other furnishings. The desk shows the breaches made by time and carelessness, despite repolishing: "les ébréchures du marbre ... les éraflures de l'acajou". In its dimensions, "carré, trapu", the desk anticipates the "dieu-coffre-fort" evoked so often in Germinal, and Zola clinches the symbolic value of the desk in the detail of the "serrures terribles, une serrure de prison", and the weight of it, "si lourd qu'on ne pouvait le bouger de place" [ibid]. The juxtaposition of safe and bed recalls the scene immediately preceding the description of the conjugal room when Lisa and Quenu count out Quenu's inheritance, the only remotely erotic scene between the two, with Lisa seemingly pregnant, as she staggers upstairs with an apronful of gold, and the counting on Lisa's bed, which remains "bouleversé";

"les draps pendaient, l'or, sur l'oreiller qui les séparait, faisait des creux, comme si des têtes s'y étaient roulées, chaudes de passion".

[ibid p 651]

This episode, including as it does elements of Zola's "erotic" bedrooms, in a parodic context, lust becoming avarice, implies that the novelist was aware of the codes he used, and that his response has not, at this stage in his career, become a cliché.

Perhaps the most significant of the characteristics exhibited by Clorinde's use of her bedroom is the personal caprice of which it is the expression. La Rouquette tells of one such escapade, before the reader sees the reality of Clorinde's apartment.

"Elle avait eu, un jour, l'étonnante fantaisie de faire tendre sa chambre de draperies noires semées de larmes d'argent, et de recevoir là ses intimes, couchée sur son lit, ensevelie dans des couvertures également noires, qui ne laissaient passer que le bout de son nez". [Son Excellence Eugène Rougon RM II p 23]

Since no context is given for this "étonnante fantaisie", it is difficult to relate it to any motive, or to deduce from it even the most obvious significance - symbolic death - or a more oblique one - crisis preceding a rebirth? A withdrawal from a past life? - and "fantaisie" it must remain. It is, however, counterpointed later by the following incident:

"un jour, elle ne voulait pas se laisser voir; elle avait cousu les rideaux de son lit de haut en bas, elle se tint assise sur le traversin, dans cette cage d'étoffe, causant tranquillement avec lui pendant plus d'une heure". [ibid p 146]

This is one of a list of "caprices stupéfiants", sharing with the "black room" incident the same neutral indicator of time - "un jour" - which divorces the caprice from any background of logic. In both cases, Clorinde withdraws in part from the world, but continues her contacts with it. There seems to be a desire to disconcert the "intimes", as well as an element of play-acting in Clorinde's behaviour. The incident of the sewn-up curtains recalls the tent-like canopy of Renée's "cabinet de toilette", which evoked the image of a "guerrière amoureuse". Here, the image is that of the veiled priestess or goddess, only partially accessible to men.

Caprices of this sort underline the power of Clorinde, her ability to force her circle of admirers and intriguers to accept her terms. At such moments, she resembles most the courtesan, whose power lies partly in her skill in renewing the décor of the sexual relationship. Clorinde's cavalier

attitude towards her political suitors finds a parallel in Nana's dismissal of her admirers [Nana RM II p 1135], and the caprices of Clorinde's bedchamber have their equivalent in Nana's search for the ultimate expression of her sensuality through constant redecoration of her bedroom.

"Deux fois déjà, elle avait refait la chambre, la première en satin mauve, la seconde en application de dentelle sur soie bleue; et elle n'était pas satisfaite, elle trouvait ça fade, cherchant encore, sans pouvoir trouver". [ibid p 1348]

Later in the novel, Nana's "dernier caprice" in redecorating her room is seen not only as "un fond superbe à sa peau vermeille de rousse", but also "simplement fait pour servir de cadre au lit, un prodige, un éblouissement" [ibid p 1434]. The focus of caprice is clearly transferred from the room to the bed itself, described by Zola as "un trône, un autel" [ibid], thus indicating the last stage of Nana's career, the apotheosis. The idolatrous element in Nana's appearance on the bed - her likeness given to the figure at the foot of the bed, the throne/altar association and especially the "religieuse impudeur d'idole redoutée" [ibid p 1462] with which Nana herself displays her nakedness on the bed - represents a development of Clorinde's withdrawals into blackness or behind her curtains. Nana suggests a dimension to Clorinde's caprices not immediately obvious in the earlier novel, and confirms them as an assertion of her sway and her status as an "idol" of Paris. Notably absent from the description are elements of soiling, disorder and incongruity of objects such as have been noted elsewhere in descriptions of bedrooms, and which spread to almost every décor of Nana except Nana's own bedroom. The incongruity of the scene lies in the characters involved, Nana, Muffat and Chouard, the situation being the ultimate variation on stage farce which Zola may be essaying in Nana⁽¹⁾. The bed itself has not lost its function as "un trône, un autel" as Zola's resumed evocation shows, and the room itself survives only as a foil to it.

(1) See Roger B. Clark: "Nana ou l'envers du rideau" - Cahiers Naturalistes Vol. 19 No. 45 1973 - pp 50-64.

The apotheosis of Nana, the quasi-religious vocabulary, exorcise only partly the earlier images of Nana naked on stage or before her glass, both occasions for a kind of terror on the part of spectators. Zola's unwillingness to show Nana's room other than as a temple, not to be desecrated, suggests the possibility that Satin's role may be designed to include that alternative. Her room is so exaggeratedly filthy and so completely wrecked by Satin herself, that it seems to accumulate in one place the ravages of both girls.

The apotheosis is achieved by images of light. The room "resplendissait" [ibid], the silver studs of the quilted ceiling evoke stars against the pink hangings, "de ce rose de chair que le ciel prend par les beaux soirs, lorsque Vénus s'allume à l'horizon", whilst the golden tassels and lace "étaient comme des flammes légères, des chevelures rousses dénouées" [ibid]. This last detail, coupled with the reference to Venus, goddess associated with Nana, imbues Nana with the status of a cosmic force, filling the evening sky, of which the bed is an image. The bedframe "rayonnait avec l'éclat neuf de ses ciselures", and its occupant herself is lambent, emitting "le reflet de neige de sa gorge". The whole room becomes an extension of Nana's person, so that the gold accoutrements, already likened to her hair, are seen as "couvrant à demi la grande nudité de la pièce dont elles rehaussent la pâleur voluptueuse". [ibid].

A similar identification of room with occupant occurs in Zola's description of Renée's bedroom in La Curée. Although Renée does not change the décor of her room in the course of the novel, and her earlier apartment is not described, the extravagance of the bedroom links it to the "caprices" of Clorinde and Nana. The chief difference lies in the novelist's approach to the décor of the apartment. In the case of Renée, only the most summary hints are given that her taste has created the room ("ces couleurs et ces

objets que le goût de Renée avait voulu tendres et souriants..." [RM I p 478]), and the imagery associated with the rooms certainly stems from Zola's fertile imagination.

A charge of self-indulgence may be levelled against Zola in all his descriptions of the Hôtel Saccard, and certainly he had, at the time of writing La Curée, little personal experience of the homes of the "haute bourgeoisie". The editor of the "Pléiade" edition draws attention to Zola's presence at the "mardis" of the Houssayes, father and son, on whom Aristide and Maxime are partly based. Presumably, this intimacy did not extend to the bedrooms. As has been noted, Zola found many details of Renée's room in an article in Le Figaro, preserved in the Dossier of La Curée, which recounts a visit by the Empress to Princess Metternich's recently refurbished private apartments. The journalist notes a number of features which Zola copies almost verbatim, though he sometimes expands them, and distributes them between Renée's boudoir and her bedroom. Such identical, or very similar, phrases, can be tabulated as follows:

Le Figaro

La chambre à coucher, un véritable chef d'œuvre d'élégance, toute tendue en étoffe de soie mate gris de lin, brochée d'énormes bouquets de roses, de lilas blancs et de boutons d'or.

Les rideaux en dentelles sont doublés en soie, posés par bandes, alternativement grise et rose.

La cheminée est en marbre blanc de Carrare, ornée de lapis et de mosaïques de pierres précieuses imitant des fruits et des fleurs de toute espèce.

La Curée

L'appartement particulier de Renée était [...] une merveille de luxe coquet. Les murs [...] se trouvaient également tendus d'une étoffe de soie mate gris de lin, brochée d'énormes bouquets de roses, de lilas blancs et de boutons d'or. Les rideaux et portières étaient en guipure de Venise, posée sur une doublure de soie, faite de bandes alternativement grises et roses. Dans la chambre à coucher, la cheminée en marbre blanc, un véritable joyau, étalait, comme une corbeille de fleurs, des incrustations de lapis et de mosaïques précieuses, reproduisant les roses, les lilas blancs et les boutons d'or de la tenture.

[RM I pp 476-7]

The details provided by the journalist are copied, but also elaborated and refined to a remarkable degree by Zola, who thereby invests the room with a significance going far beyond the merely descriptive. Thus, the "fruits et fleurs de toute espèce" figured by the ornamentation of the Princess's mantlepiece have become a more restrained re-statement of the flowers of Renée's wall-coverings. Even more than Nana's bedroom, Renée's apartment is its occupant. If the colour scheme of pink and grey is a borrowing from the existing Metternich décor, here Zola extends the use of it to the whole of Renée's apartment, several times suggesting, as here by his addition of the detail of "guipure" - a heavy lace - over silk, the skin over flesh. The "lilas blancs et boutons d'or" remind the reader of Renée's pallor, and of the "salon bouton d'or" described earlier in the novel as being designed to harmonise with the curious colour of her hair.

One of the most pervasive images used by Zola in describing these apartments is that of softness. They are "un nid de soie et de dentelle", in which the small boudoir resembles "une grande alcôve" [RM I pp 476-7]. Instead of solid inner doors, soft portières add to the impression created by the fully-upholstered furniture.

"Aucune note trop aiguë, reflet de métal, dorure claire, ne chantait dans la phrase rêveuse du rose et du gris". [ibid]

Earlier descriptions of downstairs rooms have suggested an identification of Saccard with metal and of Renée with flowers or flesh. Thus, the banishment of any metallic surface from the wife's room conveys the sexual estrangement of the couple. Other details of these apartments add further images of skin and flesh. The furniture is so grotesquely padded as to suggest organs of the body, and the portières could be likened to one of the bodily orifices. It is possible to see, beyond Zola's explicit comparisons, a sub-conscious image; the interior of the apartment is the interior of Renée herself, as already proposed in considering the "cabinet de toilette".

The bed becomes the focus of two distinct sets of images. Its outer hangings evoke for Zola an elaborate dress, not unlike those described elsewhere in the novel, by which Renée expresses her "caprices".

"On aurait dit une toilette de femme, arrondie, découpée, accompagnée de poufs, de noeuds, de volants; et ce large rideau qui se gonflait, pareil à une jupe, faisait rêver à quelque grande amoureuse penchée, se pâmant, près de choir sur les oreillers".

[ibid]

The novel's preoccupation with Renée's "chute" adds pertinence to Zola's fanciful equation of the bed-hangings with a female figure, as does the ambiguity of the adjective "grande" - the curtains are high, but Renée becomes a victim of passion, a "grande amoureuse" in another sense.

However, Zola offers a different set of images for the bed itself, "un sanctuaire [...] dans un demi-jour religieux" [ibid],

"ce monument dont l'ampleur dévote rappelait une chapelle ornée pour quelque fête".

[ibid]

Since no reference is made to any religious sentiments in Renée, the images of devoutness refer us to another cult, that of her own comfort and beauty, an aspect of the pursuit of pleasure which Zola condemns. Thus, the bed "emplissait toute une moitié de la chambre", so that "les autres meubles disparaissaient" [ibid].

"Il semblait que le lit se continuât, que la pièce entière fût un lit immense, avec ses tapis, ses peaux d'ours, ses sièges capitonnés, ses tentures matelassées qui continuaient la mollesse du sol le long des murs, jusqu'au plafond". [ibid p 478]

The evocation here takes on a fantasmagoric quality, as Zola delights in inventing details. Indeed, the whole section describing Renée's apartment

may stand as an example of how Zola infuses into a documentary source (here, Le Figaro) a rich quality of personal interpretation which contributes to the inner life of the novel. What is most interesting is the distinction between the conscious levels of fantasy - the bed hangings as a woman about to 'fall', for example, are surely intended as a comment - and those which Zola was perhaps only partly aware of, such as the underlying implication that the progression from the skin-like wall-coverings of the bedroom, to the pink flesh tones of the bathroom, and thence to the whiteness of the wardrobe may stand for the gradual penetration, violation or stripping of Renée herself.

Certainly, Zola allows Renée a glimpse of this as she recognises, at her moment of crisis, that the room has contributed to her moral decline.

"Elle revint au milieu du cabinet, le visage pourpre, ne sachant où fuir ce parfum d'alcôve, ce luxe qui se décolletait avec une impudeur de fille, qui étalait tout ce rose. La pièce était nue comme elle; la baignoire rose, la peau rose des tentures, les marbres roses des deux tables s'animaient, s'étiraient, se pelotonnaient, l'entouraient d'une telle débauche de voluptés vivantes qu'elle ferma les yeux, baissant le front, s'abîmant sous les dentelles du plafond et des murs qui l'écrasaient!"

[ibid p 576]

Renée clearly identifies the room with her own person, and we may further note that at this point, the "cabinet de toilette" is shown in disorder, reminiscent of Clorinde's apartment; the bath is unemptied, discarded clothes lie strewn, stale perfume hangs in the air. Renée sees beyond the elegance, the subtle taste displayed, and recognises the lusts underlying them;

"La table avec ses savons et ses huiles, les meubles, avec leurs rondeurs de lit, lui parlaient brutalement de sa chair, de ses amours, de toutes ces ordures qu'elle voulait oublier".

[ibid]

Her reaction to this self-knowledge is violent:

"elle rêvait d'arracher ces dentelles, de cracher sur cette soie, de briser son grand lit à coups de pied". [ibid]

To do this would be to prolong the relationship between the room and her persona, since the apartment would then correspond to Renée's self-loathing. Had this impulse been translated into action, the result would have anticipated such later devastated rooms as those of the "monsieur distingué" in Pot-Bouille, Négrel in Germinal or, most tellingly, since here too the occupant has destroyed the room's contents, that of Satin in Nana.

"Elle n'aurait pas dormi avec Maxime sur un grabat, au fond d'une mansarde. C'eût été trop ignoble. La soie avait fait son crime coquet". [ibid]

In attributing to Renée this analysis of the influence of her surroundings on her actions, Zola seems to be reinforcing his view of the importance of environment in determining the destinies of his characters. In the present instance, such a judgement may be deemed facile, unless we attribute it solely to Renée and not to the novelist. The implication that incest is linked to the corruption of high society can be disproved, not least by the example of Palmyre and Hilarion in La Terre. Equally, Zola has already established Renée's sexual curiosity by showing her as a child seeking to glimpse the male bathers at the riverside baths.⁽¹⁾ Since this clearly antedates her marriage to Saccard, it renders inadequate a simplistic view of Renée's corruption by her milieu. What is perhaps important is that she should perceive such an influence to be at work, and, significantly, Zola speaks in the next paragraph of the "craquement cérébral" which has now spent itself. Renée's disordered thoughts, her urge to destroy, and her wish to blame her surroundings can be seen as an aberration, but they nonetheless establish for the reader a further identification of room with occupant.

(1) Zola's late emendations to the proofs of Ch II of La Curée show a significant change to the last sentence. Originally, Renée's gaze sought out the "poitrines nues," but Zola substitutes, in the novel's final text, "ventres nus". This indicates a significant intensification of Renée's erotic penchants, as she now seeks out the genital area, if not, under the cloak of euphemism, the genitals themselves. [Bibliothèque Nationale N.A.F., Oeuvres d'Emile Zola 18. La Curée fo. 112].

This influence is explored in three further important bedroom settings of the Rougon-Macquart novels, those of Albine, Angélique and Clotilde, all of which are presented as influencing directly the lives of their occupants, and as reflecting in their transformations the changing emotional temperature of the narrative. They find a weaker echo in two bedrooms already considered in some detail, those of Florent and of the Quenu couple in Le Ventre de Paris. At a crucial moment, Quenu is persuaded, as much by the appearance and symbolism of his bedroom as by his wife's arguments, to refrain from political activity.

"La chambre, elle aussi, lui parut une chambre de personnes distinguées; les carrés de guipure mettaient une sorte de probité sur les chaises; les tapis, les rideaux, les vases de porcelaine à paysages, disaient leur travail et leur goût du confortable".
[RM I p 759]

The effect is comic, each detail of the room "speaking" to Quenu, as he stews under the counterpane like one of his own products, whilst from all around him "montait un bien-être qui l'étouffait un peu, d'une façon délicieuse" [ibid]. The subjectivity of this passage, the deformation of reality through the eyes of Quenu can be contrasted with the reaction of Lisa to the transformations she sees in Florent's room. These are, presumably, objectively described by Zola [ibid pp 860-861]. The trappings of revolution abound, but Lisa sees only that the "paquets de cocardes [...] faisaient d'énormes gouttes de sang". Zola notes "La puérilité de la pièce semblait tout effarée de cette décoration révolutionnaire" [ibid p 861], and that "la photographie d'Auguste et d'Augustine semblait toute blême d'épouvante", [ibid], the choice of the verb "semblait" implying that the room influences Lisa in her decision to betray Florent, though Zola shows that the waste of her money is as important as fear of revolution in her thoughts.

However, the bedrooms which truly can be considered as agents in the narrative are all those of girls. Both Albine and Clotilde grow up to mature womanhood in bedrooms which exert an influence on their destinies, and Angélique is

restrained from a decisive step by the intervention of spiritual feelings engendered by her room. In all three cases, the room represents tradition, the weight of the past.

At first glance, Angélique's room has the characteristics of such self-consciously "virginal" rooms as those of Nana at La Mignotte [RM II p 1234] or of Jean Macquart at Père Fouchard's [La Débâcle RM V p 794]. But, whereas each of these is used partly to contrast with the occupant, the unvirginal Nana and the battle-soiled Jean, Angélique's personality is in harmony with her room to the surprising extent that she seems to have left no trace of her own taste, interest or belongings in its furnishings or decoration. Thus, the room can influence her, since she has not attempted to influence the room.

Zola presents the room in a long paragraph, in contrast to the brief or absent descriptions of other rooms in Hubert's house. Zola mentions first the size of the room, "très vaste", which is echoed by the large bed, twice described as "énorme" in this paragraph. This "gigantisme", a well-known tendency of Zola's descriptive style, seems unjustified in the case of the room itself, since at no point does the size of the room impinge on the narrative, and it may be noted here that Zola tends to describe bedrooms as being either uncommonly large or very small. Few rooms escape one or the other of these polarisations, and it may be that here the size of the bed determines the size of the room. The size of the bed, as will be shown, is important. Zola goes on to note the whiteness of the room, even the beams and joists being whitewashed. As if to heighten this "nudité blanche", "les vieux meubles de chêne semblaient noirs" [Le Rêve RM IV p 859], Zola is at pains to explain logically the presence in the room of fine old pieces of furniture, Louis XIII, Louis XIV, Louis XV in style, removed to the loft when the house was modernised. The true reason may be his wish to set Angélique, even when alone in her room, against a weight of tradition and solid moral values, "ces

vieilleries vénérables", as Zola calls them, whilst mentioning the white "poêle de faïence" and the table which constitute the modern elements of the room, and which "juraient" [ibid]. The coldness of the room, where the source of heat, although white, clashes with the rest, is an evident reminder of the chastity of Angélique, and the phrase "cette nudité blanche" evoke the tension between virginity and eroticism established by the description, early in the novel, of the ice-covered statues of martyred saints decorating the cathedral.

Zola introduces a significant new element in his notation of the fabric of the bed coverings, "une ancienne perse rose, à bouquets de bruyères, si pâlie qu'elle était devenue d'un rose éteint, soupçonné à peine" [ibid]. Very distant, but nonetheless present, an echo is heard of Renée Saccard's rooms with their sensual flesh-coloured hangings. Angélique's bed suggests, faintly but surely, that the virginal occupant will not be immune to the sensuous longings of the flesh. However, the colour has faded from a more intense shade which implies that, in their present state, the pink flowers have little power.

Indeed, as Angélique surveys her room at midnight, attempting to suppress her love for Félicien, the struggle is symbolised, or exteriorised, by the intensified whiteness of the room;

"Toute cette nudité blanche en était accrue, élargie et reculée
ainsi que dans un rêve". [ibid p 904]

This is seen by Angélique as the effect of "une clarté vive", "cette blancheur qui [éclairait] la chambre, une lumière d'aube, laiteuse et fraîche" [ibid]. The suggestion, never directly expressed, is that some angelic force is present, watching over Angélique, who, nevertheless, experiences a more puzzling hallucination. Her bed seems to undergo a metamorphosis, the precise nature of which is not explained. Zola notes once more the size of the bed, its "ampleur royale", surely disproportionate for a young girl, and hence significant, which "l'émotionnait, comme si elle ne l'avait jamais vu, dressant ses colonnes"

[ibid]. The suggestion of suppressed libido in the massive bed with its phallic columns is counteracted by the immediate sensation of levitation:

"elle se croyait sur une nuée, en plein ciel, soulevée par un vol d'ailes muettes et invisibles. Un instant, elle en eut le balancement large ..."

[ibid]

The hallucination of angelic intervention dispels the sensuality of the huge, pink-swathed and "royal" bed, which for a moment threatened to evoke such unvirginal and fantastic beds as those of Renée and Nana. But the "balancement large" implies that the visionary side of Angélique's nature is not without its dangers, even when seeming to work for the good.

The last intervention of the bedroom in Angélique's life is also the most powerful. As she prepares to elope with Félicien, she finds herself influenced in her decision to remain by the power of the room. The décor intensifies its own whiteness, or so it seems to Angélique: "jamais la chambre ne lui avait paru si blanche" [ibid p 966], and Zola proceeds to repeat the word "blanc", ("Etait-ce tant de blanc qui la retenait ainsi? Toujours elle avait aimé le blanc." [ibid p 967]) before showing Angélique's realisation of the power of the room.

"Certainement, des liens secrets les unissaient à sa personne. Les murs blancs, surtout, la grande blancheur du plafond mansardé, l'enveloppait d'une robe de candeur, dont elle ne se serait dévêtue qu'avec des larmes. Désormais, tout cela faisait partie de son être, le milieu était entré en elle". [ibid p 969]

Verisimilitude seems less important here than the poetic expression given to feelings of regret. The image of nudity reappears, this time applied to Angélique, about to strip off "une robe de candeur". The realism of this discreet evocation of Angélique's planned elopement, is softened by the deliberate archaism of the language, ("robe de candeur dont elle ne se serait dévêtue .."). In this passage, Zola evokes specifically the loftiness of the room, and here the "gigantisme" may be seen as an attempt to create a domestic counterweight to the massive cathedral. When later, Zola goes on to speak of

"la blancheur triomphale de la chambre" [ibid p 972], the white apotheosis of Denise Baudu at the end of Au Bonheur des Dames springs to mind, with its images of a virginal bed and the accoutrements of weddings at the White Sale display at the close of the novel. Like Denise, Angélique is a pure young girl hesitating before the realities of marriage, but whose chastity is ultimately her strongest weapon.

Crucial though Angélique's room may be in her decision not to elope with Félicien, its role remains subordinate, necessarily subjective, since Zola presents it to the reader only through Angélique's perceptions.

A more pervasive influence on character and action is exerted by the rooms of Albine and Clotilde. In both cases, the manifestations are prolonged and felt by more than one character, and in each room, the presence of the past, generalised in Le Rêve, is precisely located in the eighteenth century, with its associations for Zola's generation of an age of elegant licentiousness. Albine's room in particular is presented by Zola as intervening in the lives of Albine and Serge, an indoor counterpart of Le Paradou and, like the garden, leading the couple through the different stages of sexual evolution until, the "faute" accomplished, it relapses, like Le Paradou, into quiescence.

Zola's initial description of Albine's bedroom - the only room described at Le Paradou - insists upon the decorative erotic scenes in the plasterwork and paintings, so faded as to be indistinguishable, apart from

"les ventres et les derrières roses de petits Amours volant par bandes, jouant à des jeux qu'on ne distinguait plus".

[La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret RM I p 1316]

The plan of the room suggests the style of the eighteenth century, with its "alcôve", its "tonneaux", its "portes à double battant", and, most typical of that past age,

"le plafond arrondi, jadis à fond bleu de ciel, avec des encadrements de cartouches, de médaillons, de noeuds de rubans couleur chair".

[ibid]

We note immediately the contrast with Angélique's room, to which the term "nudité" can be applied metaphorically, whereas the remaining decoration of Albine's room literally depicts nakedness. Zola introduces a link between the two rooms, however, when he goes on to describe the flesh tints of the decoration as faded, "d'un gris doux, un gris qui gardait l'attendrissement de ce paradis fané" [ibid]. Like Angélique's chintz faded from purple to pale pink, the flesh-toned ribbons of Albine's room, now pale grey, suggest a sensuality in abeyance, while the "ancien meuble Louis XV" [ibid] lacks the restraining influence of the more sober styles of the earlier Louis XIII and Louis XIV found in Angélique's room, their ponderousness contributing to its moral weight. The reference to Louis XV must evoke the licence of the Régence, and looks forward to Clotilde's room in Le Docteur Pascal.

Albine's room contains both an "alcôve" and a "canapé", suggestive of the narrow beds in the seminary and presbytery from which Serge has escaped, and his hesitation between the two reflects the growing tensions between the childish sexless state to which he has reverted, and the increasing demands of his adult nature. This tension is expressed in the first description of the room, in Zola's account of the draperies:

"La grande alcôve [...] était fermée, ainsi que les fenêtres, par des rideaux de calicot, cousus à gros points, d'une innocence singulière au milieu de cette pièce restée toute tiède d'une lointaine odeur de volupté".

[ibid]

By qualifying innocence as "singulière", Zola suggests that it is abnormal, and not destined to last, despite the threatening sensuality being as yet "lointaine".

The room is first shown to be actively in league with the parkland during Serge's spell of sexual latency. Significantly, the windows are open, so that

"le Paradou, entrant, riait avec eux, dans la chambre" [ibid p 1354]. Zola leaves the reader in no doubt that the paintings on the walls were initially erotic or even indecent; "ces jolies indécences de boudoir"; "une luxure aimable", "[les] détails trop crus, auxquels paraissait s'être complu l'ancien amour" [ibid p 1354-5]. The invasion of the room by the sunlight provides the ostensible explanation of this selective fading, which enables Serge and Albine to "[faire] le tour des panneaux, sans que rien d'impur leur vînt", from their examination of them [ibid p 1354].

"La chambre, ainsi que le parc, était naturellement redevenue vierge, sous la gloire tranquille du soleil". [ibid p 1355]

Thus, park, room and man are in harmony, expressed by the regression of these erotic paintings to an innocent state. But the sun is a life-giving force, and though its first contact produces a washing-out effect, soon "la chaleur de l'été" leads to "une resurrection de chairs tendres" [ibid p 1394], corresponding to Serge's rebirth as a man, the adolescence of his new life, as he and Albine are "alanguis et troublés davantage par les derniers voiles qui cachait les crudités des tableaux" [ibid p 1395]. The frank eroticism of the paintings not only anticipates the "faute" towards which the young couple will be directed, but also hints at the death of Albine among the flowers, in

"cette grande fille nue, surprise sur des gerbes de fleurs, fauchées par de petits Amours, qui, la faucille en main, ajoutaient sans cesse à la couche de nouvelles poignées de roses". [ibid p 1394-5]

The reviving pictures become progressively more animated, as the verbs take on greater precision, and the movement threatens to overflow from the picture frame to include the living watchers, who feel watched in their turn: "ils éprouvaient un malaise, à croire que les peintures les regardaient" [ibid p 1396]. The putti seem ready to entrap Serge and Albine into joining the painted couples, "les menaçant de les lier ensemble [...] en un coin du plafond" [ibid]. The ultimate illusion of resurrection is presented by Zola as a question:

"est-ce qu'ils allaient tous descendre? N'était-ce pas eux qui soupiraient déjà et dont l'haleine emplissait la chambre de l'odeur d'une volupté ancienne?"

[ibid]

The question may be supposed to exist in the mind of the human pair, perhaps even to be formulated between them, but in its context on the page, it adds significantly to the feeling of events beyond the control of human agency, even of the novelist himself.

The reference to the scent of past loves provides a transition to Serge's expression of the conflict between his unacknowledged desires and the childhood state which he still maintains.

"les premiers jours, cela arrivait de loin, comme un souvenir d'odeur. Mais à présent, je ne puis plus dormir, l'odeur grandit jusqu'à me suffoquer. Le soir surtout, l'alcôve est si chaude, que je finirai par coucher sur le canapé".

[ibid]

Indeed, Serge does sleep on the "canapé", since "jamais l'alcôve n'avait exhalé une senteur si troublante" [ibid], but the whole room, being impregnated with the eroticism of the past, produces "des rêves fous", specifically ascribed to "les nudités des peintures" [ibid p 1397]. Zola has already, in Le Ventre de Paris, shown how the male occupant of a girl's room may feel insecure unless reassured of the harmlessness of the owner's femininity. Zola, in describing Albine's room as acting primarily upon Serge, seems to develop and refine the tensions he has already identified in the earlier novel. Certainly, the erotic stimulus of the room, made visible in the revived paintings, constitutes an admirable analysis, via the décor, of sexual tensions, normally felt by adolescent boys, as well as enabling Zola to hint at the manifestations of these tensions in Serge's "rêves fous".

The burden of the education of Serge and Albine lies with the garden, and the room has played out its role by the stage of adolescence. The final consummation of the erotic urges felt in the room takes place in the park rather than in the alcove, though we recall that the tree in its turn is "une alcôve verte" [ibid p 1407].

Thus, when Albine returns alone to the room, its task is accomplished, the pictures are faded, and

"rien d'impur ne lui venait plus des Amours de plâtre, rien de troublant ne descendait plus des peintures où des membres de femme se vautraient. Il n'y avait, sous le plafond bleu, que le parfum étouffant des fleurs".

[ibid p 1515]

In Le Docteur Pascal, Clotilde's room at La Souléiade does not intervene in the action to the extent of Albine's room at Le Paradou, but Zola evidently regards its role as positive, describing it as "la grande chambre complice" [RM V p 1061] and developing this idea further.

"Toute une complicité affectueuse leur venait ainsi des moindres objets, de ces vieilleries si douces, où d'autres avaient aimé avant eux, où elle-même, à cette heure, remettait son printemps. Un soir, elle jura qu'elle avait vu, dans la psyché, une dame très jolie, qui se déshabillait, et qui n'était sûrement pas elle; puis, reprise par son besoin de chimère, elle fit tout haut le rêve qu'elle apparaîtrait de la sorte, cent ans plus tard, à une amoureuse de l'autre siècle, un soir de nuit heureuse."

[ibid pp 1068-69]

This hallucination - or manifestation - adds a dimension to Zola's concept of the past watching over the present. Albine and Serge too feel the presence of long-dead lovers, but no physical manifestation takes place other than Serge's claim to "retrouver l'empreinte d'une petite main" on his bed [La Faute de L'Abbé Mouret RM I p 1396]. Clotilde's vision, and more especially her projection of herself into the future, represents a remarkable evolution in Zola's concept of the positive value of love, and its persistence after death. For Albine and Serge, the physical act exhausts the influence of the park and of the bedroom. Though Albine dies pregnant by Serge, there could never have been a hopeful outcome of their love, and Zola never suggests that it will form a part of the spell of the room. For Clotilde and Pascal, however, as for Zola and Jeanne Rozerot, the birth of a child ensures continuity, even after Pascal's death. Clotilde, by evoking her own re-appearance, must assume her own death, but Zola avoids any suggestion of this necessary stage. The exorcism of the bedroom has progressed far towards its complete liberation from Zola's personal demons. As if to stress the point, Zola includes in the

furnishings of Clotilde's room, a symbolic clock, depicting Love smiling at sleeping Time.

Other details of this room present a continuity with previously stated themes. The stress laid by Zola on the faded wall-covering, now pink and "couleur d'aurore" expresses the sensuality of flesh tints already familiar from other descriptions, but also a sense of freshness and hope implied by the word "aurore". Zola rationalises the fading by noting that the curtains were already in the house when Pascal purchased it, and date from the time of Napoléon I's Empire: "mais il avait fallu les faire nettoyer, ce qui les avait pâlis encore" [Le Docteur Pascal RM V p 937]. The Empire décor also serves to introduce the element of nudity, so persistent in Zola's bedroom scenes, if only symbolically. Here, the motif of sphinxes on the hangings and as part of the bed itself hints at the last image of the novel; their bared breasts find an equivalent as Clotilde suckles her child. The evocation of an earlier libertine era, so essential to Le Paradou, is fleetingly made here in the shape of a counterpane made from "une ancienne jupe de soie Louis XV" [ibid p 938]. Indeed, in his preliminary notes for the novel, Zola's single rectification of all these details is to have revised the date of the house itself from "la fin de l'autre siècle" to "la moitié de l'autre siècle".⁽¹⁾

Other themes evoked here, as in earlier novels include the bed as altar, though without the idolatrous elements present in Nana:

"Elle y avait allumé les deux flambeaux; toute la vieille chambre souriante, avec ses tentures d'un rose fané si tendre, semblait transformée en chapelle, et, sur le lit, tel qu'un linge sacré, offert à l'adoration des croyants, elle avait étalé le corsage en ancien point d'Alençon". [ibid p 1059]

(1) Bibliothèque Nationale, NAF 10290 Oeuvres d'Emile Zola 26, Le Docteur Pascal 3, fo.20.

We see also traces of love-making, as in Germinal, though much attenuated, and without any suggestion of revulsion, and of feminine disorder, frequently noted elsewhere:

"Il n'y avait pas dérangé un objet de place, depuis la triste matin du départ, et une jupe oubliée traînait encore sur un fauteuil [...]. Il sanglotait devant les meubles, il baisait le lit, la place marquée où se dessinait l'élanement divin de son corps".

[ibid p 1160]

Such themes can all be traced back to the most elaborately imagined of all the bedrooms of the Rougon-Macquart novels, Renée's apartment in La Curée. The distance travelled by Zola from the Parc Monceau to La Souléïade can be gauged by Pascal's vision of Clotilde's room as he lies dying in it. The "bonne chambre de la Souléïade", as Borie calls it is indeed a "lieu de jouissance", but also a consoling and soothing place. In the time-scheme, it is placed outside the confines of the Second Empire which Zola's great series condemns, and in Zola's own life it celebrates the fruitful, and hence justified, liaison with Jeanne Rozerot. The crucial intermediary seems to be Angélique's room in Le Rêve; a room not dedicated to "la jouissance", and indeed actively restraining the heroine from self-indulgence. But the exalted and mystical tone of Pascal's vision returns us to the world of spirituality in which Le Rêve is steeped, and which constitutes, as much as the world of physicality, the union between Clotilde and Pascal.

"Il en attendait un soulagement, et il ne fut pas déçu, des consolations lui arrivèrent de la tenture couleur d'aurore, de chacun des meubles familiers, du vaste lit où il avait tant aimé et où il s'était couché pour mourir. Sous le haut plafond, par la pièce frissonnante, flottaient toujours une pure odeur de jeunesse, une infinie douceur d'amour, dont il était enveloppé comme d'une caresse fidèle, et réconforté".

[ibid p 1174]

DINING-ROOMS IN LES ROUGON-MACQUART

Within the confines of the house, the bedroom is essentially a private area. The dining-room, in contrast, functions as a communal area, in which all members of the family, and privileged outsiders, may congregate regularly. The public acceptability of eating is also acknowledged by the existence of cafés, restaurants and canteens. Yet the act of eating is hedged about by conventions and taboos in all societies, not least in the bourgeois world of the nineteenth century, and a vague unease at eating in front of others seems not uncommon. Zola's novels betray a high degree of ambivalence about eating, particularly in a public place, which emerges in descriptions of dining-rooms and/or behaviour at meals. As this study progressed, it seemed essential to include, in the exploration of dining-rooms, more open areas like the canteen in Au Bonheur des Dames or the restaurant at the Salon in L'Oeuvre^x, since the spectacle of public feeding draws from Zola a disapproving response which illuminates his attitudes towards more domestic scenes. Equally, it became evident that Zola often displaces the act of eating from the designated room to another part of the house, or to a point outside. Frequently, the chosen place is the kitchen, which seems natural enough in cases such as Claude's cottage at Bennecourt [L'Oeuvre, RM IV p 160], the farmhouse in La Terre [ibid p 449] or the medieval house occupied by Hubert in Le Rêve [ibid p 821]. When families are too poor to live otherwise, eating must take place in a room which serves other purposes. Cases in point include Gervaise at various times in L'Assommoir, Claude and Christine in L'Oeuvre and the Maheus in Germinal. In part, at least, such cases are governed by purely documentary considerations such as those noted by Zola in his visits to the 'corons'⁽¹⁾, but discussion of such arrangements will be deferred until a later chapter.

* (1) Bibliothèque Nationale, Département des Manuscrits. Nouvelles Acquisitions Françaises no. 10308 fo^s 211-2.

The broadest scope for Zola's invention lies with the dining-rooms of the bourgeoisie, and particularly the higher ranks of that class. We may note, however, that several bourgeois families focus all their communal activities on the dining-room. In La Conquête de Plassans, this concentration on one room provides a possible reason for the virtual absence of descriptions of domestic interiors from this novel. Moreover, the invasion of the privacy of the Mouret family by Abbé Faujas and his mother is vividly conveyed by the gradual insinuation of their presence into the family's meals. In the case of the Chanteau family in La Joie de Vivre, Zola offers a rationalisation of the family's decision to use their dining-room as a family room. Chanteau, crippled by gout, "couchait au rez-de-chaussée de l'autre côté du couloir, dans l'ancien salon transformé en chambre à coucher" [RM III p 830]. Clearly, this arrangement disrupts the family whilst apparently bringing it together, since M. and Mme Chanteau now occupy separate rooms. The third example concerns the Baudu family in Au Bonheur des Dames, whose living quarters behind their shop are never clearly described. The shop itself seems to be an extension of the private accommodation, a substitute living-room, as in the case of Gervaise's workroom in L'Assommoir. Unlike Gervaise, Baudu uses the dining-room as the centre of family life, extending his authority to include his employees, and his young relatives from Normandy.

All three dining-rooms are penetrated by outsiders, albeit by members of the family in the case of Pauline Quenu in La Joie de Vivre and of Denise and her brothers in Au Bonheur des Dames. They are intruders none the less, who witness the breakdown of the family over the years, and, of course, the Faujas couple actively promote this collapse. In these three novels, the dining-room as the focal point of self-indulgence scarcely counts, other than in M. Chanteau's longing for foods forbidden by his doctor; the Baudus' meal, for example, seems barely adequate. The table appears rather as a symbol of unity and happiness, or at least of continuity, since the melancholy of the Baudu household is offset by the recital of the family history and of its proposed prolongation by the marriage of the heiress to the business

with the chief employee. Zola's purpose seems, at least in part, to be to depict order before the onset of disorder - a progression frequently evoked in dining-room scenes, as will be demonstrated.

Zola's attitude towards meals is revealed as predominantly negative in several ways. Of these, one of the most consistent is his refusal to use meals as the setting for important plot developments. An obvious exception to this is Lantier's return during Gervaise's name-day banquet in L'Assommoir, and it is true that quarrels occur between Nana and Fontan over a meal in bed, and after a meal in the first chapter of La Bête Humaine. Conversely, little of importance develops during the banquets in La Curée and Son Excellence Eugène Rougon, at the children's party meal in Une Page d'Amour or in the canteen scenes in Au Bonheur des Dames.

A further negative impression arises from Zola's attitude towards meals as a manifestation of appetite, symbolic as well as literal. In particular, buffets, parties and restaurants elicit from Zola descriptions which express his disapproval of the scrambling for food and the gorging beyond reasonable needs which must be linked to his view of the "ruée des appétits" unleashed by the Second Empire. Implied in this disapproval is Zola's dislike of promiscuity, in its original sense of indiscriminate, even indiscriminating, relationships. In a comment on the crowds thronging the restaurant at the Salon in L'Oeuvre, Zola first offers disparaging comments on the poor food and cramped conditions, then continues:

"Et ce qui était le ragout de ce jour de vernissage, c'était justement la promiscuité où se coudoyaient là tous les mondes, des filles, des bourgeoises, de grands artistes, de simples imbéciles, une rencontre de hasard, un mélange dont le louche imprévu allumait les yeux des plus honnêtes".

[RM IV p 298]

Zola seems to imply that the breakdown of the natural hierarchy of society will result in danger and corruption for even "les plus honnêtes", and this message can be read into other scenes such as the buffet in La Curée and the crowds of shoppers in Au Bonheur des Dames. Within the context of eating, Zola's aversion to the mass consumption of food gives reason to think that only a tête-à-tête meal will find approval in his eyes, as will be seen.

Perhaps the most striking of the negative patterns in Zola's evocation of meals lies in his general lack of interest in the food consumed. On one occasion, a dinner party takes place before the scene begins, at the opening of the Quatrième Partie of Une Page d'Amour, where the meal has just ended with no mention of the dishes:

"On avait servi les rince-bouche, et les dames, délicatement, s'essuyaient les doigts" [RM II p 975]

Sometimes, a meal consists of a mere listing of dishes, no comment being offered on its quality or atmosphere. Thus, when Rougon and Clorinde eat together, in Son Excellence Eugène Rougon, the importance of the scene lies rather in its setting, the dining-room of the minister's official residence, "une pièce immense", where two footmen wait on them, and where "les deux couverts mis sur une petite table devant la fenêtre, étaient comme perdus". [RM II p 233]. The food conveys perhaps the business-like mood of the encounter, but remains a mere list:

"quelques radis, une tranche de saumon froid, des côtelettes à la purée et un peu de fromage. Ils ne touchèrent pas au vin". [ibid]

Even an elaborate meal may reveal an indifference to the food as such, since Zola merely copied the menu of a private dinner party when recounting Nana's housewarming party⁽ⁱ⁾.

(i) Bibliothèque Nationale, Nouvelles Acquisitions Françaises no. 10313 fo 34: cited in RM II p 1708 (Notes on Nana)

It is possible to conclude that Zola attaches no novelistic importance to particular types of food, and only rarely isolates an item to make it part of a network of symbols. Bread is the most obvious food in this respect, forming, for example, an important part of the meal given by Goujet to the starving Gervaise in L'Assommoir.

"Il posa le ragou[^]t sur la table, coupa du pain, lui versa à boire.
[.....] De grosses larmes roulaient le long de ses joues,
tombaient sur son pain.[.....].

- Voulez-vous encore du pain? demandait-il à demi-voix.

[RM II p 776]

The biblical echoes of the bread of sorrow are obvious, and the ritualistic feeding of Gervaise conveyed by the simple gestures of the first sentence quoted prepares us for the hushed, sacramental tones of Goujet's offer of more bread. The symbolic value of bread in Germinal, its name being cried out by the marching miners to stand for all their needs, is ironically underlined by Cécile's impulsive gift of a brioche to the Maheu children. The echo of the rejoinder attributed to Marie-Antoinette, "Qu'ils mangent donc de la brioche", confers on the cake a role in the network of revolutionary images in this novel [RM III p 1214]. A further example of a single dish which Zola intends to carry a deeper meaning, is provided by the roast goose, highlight of Gervaise's name-day feast in L'Assommoir. Zola insists on its fatness, and mentions its "peau de blonde", characteristics which link it with Gervaise herself. Thus, the cutting up and devouring of the goose by the company, and the crunching of its bones by a marauding cat can be seen as the eventual fate of Gervaise at the hands of her circle and of Lantier [RM II p 576].

Despite such instances of significant foods, Zola's menus principally reflect the occasion - formal, informal or even improvised - and the class of the assembly. However, the choice of gourmet dishes offered by obsequious waiters at Nana's housewarming assortis ill with the rowdy demi-monde folk gathered to eat them. No doubt this is intentional, forming an element of the "grande

dame" pretensions of Nana. Gervaise's guests, more typically, eat abundantly of classic dishes such as "petits pois au lard", "blanquette de veau", for example, and the menu improvised by Christine when Sandoz arrives unexpectedly at Bennecourt in L'Oeuvre, "un déjeuner extraordinaire" conveys exactly the note of spontaneity, of informality among friends and of delight in the resources of the countryside which characterises the encounter:

"une friture de goujons après les oeufs à la coque, puis le bouilli de la veille assaisonné en salade, avec des pommes de terre et un hareng saur".

[RM IV p 160]

The epithet "extraordinaire" seems appropriate to this curious repast, which Zola presents in reverse order initially, as if to emphasise its unconventional ingredients. Only after this list does he offer interpretative comments:

"C'était délicieux, l'odeur forte et appétissante du hareng [.....] la chanson du café [.....] des fraises cueillies à l'instant, un fromage qui sortait de la laiterie d'une voisine ...

[ibid]

Zola records too, in Au Bonheur des Dames, the tendency of mass catering to offer insipid foods, or alternatively, inferior dishes highly seasoned in the shop canteen - "du boeuf sauce piquante" or "de la raie", the latter rejected by the male employees. "Jamais de rôti dans cette baraque", as Hutin says [RM III p 543]. Zola's willingness to use an actual menu for Nana's party, rather than devise one which might illuminate the characters or their actions, appears to be merely the most evident symptom of his lack of interest in food as material for the novelist.

Dining-rooms themselves, though often the setting of meals in Zola's novels, show a tendency similar to that detected in the descriptions of bedrooms.

The room itself often remains shadowy and conventional, attention being focused on the table, as on the bed in the bedroom. The trend towards blandness in Zola's descriptions of rooms and furnishings seems indeed to be most marked in the case of domestic dining-rooms, for which Zola sometimes provides no details at all, or so few that the "description" remains perfunctory. The Abbé's dining-room in La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret may serve as an example.

"une grande pièce carrelée, peinte en gris, sans autres meubles qu'une table et des chaises".

[RM I p1227]

So minimal a description almost defies comment, and, like the very similar evocation of other barely-furnished rooms in poor homes, it need not detain us. However, the bourgeois dining-room sometimes offers little more. Thus, the Rougon's rooms, the first domestic room to be described in the whole Rougon-Macquart series, receives short shrift:

"une table et une douzaine de chaises se perdirent dans l'ombre de cette vaste pièce, dont la fenêtre s'ouvrait sur le mur gris d'une maison voisine".

[La Fortune des Rougon
RM I p 69]

Indeed, its details are less precise than those of Adélaïde's humbler abode in the same novel:

"cette salle, dont le sol était pavé, et qui servait à la fois de cuisine et de salle à manger avait pour uniques meubles des chaises de paille, une table posée sur des tréteaux et un vieux coffre qu'Adélaïde avait transformé en canapé",

[ibid p 138]

which Zola follows with details of a statue of the Virgin in a niche. Here a clearer picture emerges, with details of materials; "chaises de paille", "sol...pavé", and of the multiple function so often found in Zola's working-class descriptions, as well as the first indications of the delight in improvisation and transformation of rooms which, it will be shown, forms an important part of his description of homes.

Even so opulent a dining-room as that of the Saccards in La Curée remains anonymous and blank, by the absence of the originally planned decorations, to which

Zola draws attention.

"Les quatre grands panneaux avaient dû être ménagés de façon à recevoir des peintures de nature morte; mais ils étaient restés vides, le propriétaire de l'hôtel ayant sans doute reculé devant une dépense purement artistique".

[RM I p 338]

These empty spaces are filled by the blank "velours gris vert" of the room's chairs, curtains and portières, the result being

"un caractère sobre et grave, calculé pour concentrer sur la table toutes les splendeurs de la lumière".

[ibid]

Such explanations of the effect of the décor are not uncommon in dining-room scenes, and, indeed, the device occurs in many other contexts, though perhaps less consistently. Thus, an initial description of Hélène Grandjean's dining-room in Une Page d'Amour is strictly factual in nature.

"La salle à manger était meublée en acajou, une table, un buffet et huit chaises. Rosalie alla tirer les rideaux de reps rouge. Une suspension très simple, une lampe de porcelaine blanche dans un cercle de cuivre, éclairait le couvert, les assiettes symétriques et le potage qui fumait".

[RM II p 823]

Zola returns to the scene, this time with an interpretation of the same elements previously presented without comment.

"Rosalie avait tiré soigneusement les rideaux de reps rouge; la petite salle à manger, bien close, éclairée par la calme lueur de la suspension, qui pendait toute blanche, prenait, au milieu des secousses de l'ouragan, une douceur d'intimité attendrie. Sur le buffet d'acajou, des porcelaines reflétaient la lumière tranquille. Et, dans cette paix, les quatre convives causaient sans hâte, attendaient le bon plaisir de la bonne, en face de la belle propreté bourgeoise du couvert".

[ibid p 868]

Faced with so many hints from Zola himself, the commentator might find little to add to such a passage, though it is worth noting that Hélène's dining-room is unusual in being small; for the majority of bourgeois rooms, some word indicates their large dimensions. The impression Zola seeks to create here is of small-scale cosiness, a haven from the storms outside, a stable, comforting womb-like space, the "reps rouge" intensifying this effect.

Similar emotions are evoked by the Grégoire family's dining-room in Germinal and are spelled out by Zola. Here the comfort stems from incidentals, there being "aucun luxe"; "la grande table, les chaises, un buffet d'acajou" set the tone of apparent restraint, denied by the details which precede and follow - the "feu de houille" intensifies the heat from the "calorifère"; and the "fauteuils profonds trahissaient l'amour du bien-être, les longues digestions heureuses".[RM III p 1195]

In the same novel, the Hennebeaus' dining-room offers an unusual profusion of details, ranging from the tapestries on the walls, through the silverware behind the "vitreaux des crédences" (whose ecclesiastical overtones are surely intended), to the plants, identified by name as is the type of pot in which they stand. The evident intention is to afford a contrast with the bare homes of the miners, and Zola notes the "tiédeur de serre" despite the cold wind outside, which astonishes the delegation of miners as they arrive [ibid p 1310]. Once again, the dining-room is clearly depicted as a refuge, the world outside as hostile, like the "ouragan" noted in Une Page d'Amour.

In this context, it is possible to reexamine a décor already referred to, the family room of the Mourets in La Conquête de Plassans. Unusual among the Rougon-Macquart novels in having very few descriptions of the rooms, this work offers a series of views of the same room at different stages of the plot, and may be seen as a variation of Zola's more common technique of presenting a meal at various points of its duration. The Mourets' dining-room, as has already been noted, is an example of bourgeois adaption of a room to purposes other than the original ones. It virtually excludes all other rooms as settings for the action. Only briefly is a bedroom glimpsed, and Zola seems more concerned to situate the Mourets' house in its relation to the houses of other characters, culminating in the fire, when bystanders seek to identify the contents of the burning rooms.

Zola first evokes the dining-room as a happy, harmonious place, where the setting sun "rendait toutes gaies les assiettes de porcelaine, les timbales

des enfants, la nappe blanche". "Tiède, recueillie" describe the room, and the view into the garden proposes a natural, sensible antidote to any feeling of closeting, over-protective oppression. There are no details here of furniture but rather the evocation of a place of healthy family feeling, balanced between the bright warmth of the sun and the "enfouissement verdâtre du jardin". [La Conquête de Plassans RM I p 905]

Danger threatens with the intrusion of the Faujas couple, invited by Mouret into the family group. Significantly, the room is now hermetically sealed off, but menacingly so. Mouret comments that the smallness of the room makes it easy to heat.

"En effet, la salle à manger était soigneusement garnie de bourrelets de façon que pas un souffle d'air ne passait par les fentes des boiseries. Un grand poêle de faïence entretenait là une chaleur de baignoire".

[ibid p 966]

The stopping-up of cracks implies a determination to exclude invaders from outside, contradicted by Mouret's invitation to the Faujas couple. The room has just been contrasted, in conversation, with the chill of the rest of the house, a further hint at the womb-like, protective role of the dining-room, further underlined by Zola's stress on family activities transferred to the dining-room in winter - reading and games. The arrival of the outsiders is marked by Mouret's bravado in demonstrating his control over his domain.

"Il faisait trop chaud, Mouret ayant bourré le poêle outre mesure pour prouver qu'il ne regardait pas à une bûche de plus".

[ibid p 967]

At the same time, a gesture which seems welcoming anticipates Mouret's destruction of the house by fire, in order to dislodge these same intruders, so that the detail becomes ambivalent. The absence of heat similarly signifies family disunity, as Mouret and his wife eat alone, estranged by the departure of their children.

"...cette salle à manger, si joyeuse autrefois du tapage des enfants, si vide et si triste aujourd'hui. La pièce lui semblait glacée".

[ibid p 1082]

Mouret's impression of chill finds a visual expression in the symbolic separation from his wife at table, "avec les deux couverts isolés, séparés par toute la largeur de la grande table". [ibid p 1083]. Light and heat have departed; "L'ombre emplissait les coins, le froid tombait du plafond" [ibid].

Mouret's departure from the family circle and his replacement by Faujas are accompanied by a renewal of the life of the room. "Le poêle ronflait, la pièce était toute tiède" [ibid p 1085]. This revival, accompanied by flattering attentions paid to the interloper by wife and maid, again contrasts inner warmth with outer cold, since "ce fut un hiver charmant". [ibid]

Zola's last presentation of the room provides the first indication of its furnishing; other than table, chairs and stove, by his mention of "deux armoires à droite et à gauche du poêle". [ibid p 1193]. Mouret discovers, after his inspection of the disordered kitchen, evidence of the complete disruption of his carefully arranged life-style. The normally closed cupboard stands open, containers are breached: "un sac de papier gris, crevé, laissait couler des morceaux de sucre jusque sur le plancher". Here, the emphasis given to the word "crevé", and the inclusion of "jusque" indicate the extent of the disruption. An unstoppered cognac bottle, preserving jars haphazardly sampled, "les provisions de toutes sortes rongées, salies comme par le passage d'une armée de rats" [ibid p 1194], the remains of food on the floor, are details which both symbolise and exemplify the breaking open of the closed, hermetically sealed area of family life.

The progressive revelation, in La Conquête de Plassans, of the dining-room as image of the break-up of family life is echoed to a lesser extent by the Baudu family in Au Bonheur des Dames and the Chanteau family in La Joie de Vivre, as has already been indicated. For these two families, the breaching of the family unit is less grave than in La Conquête

de Plassans, since the newcomers are members of the family, and are either welcomed, in the case of Pauline Quenu, or do not prolong their intrusion, since Denise and her brothers find their niches elsewhere than with their uncle Baudu. Nonetheless, the Baudu and Chanteau families fail to resist the strains of family tensions, or simply of time, and their dissolution, though less spectacular than that of the Mouret group, is the more striking for their earlier concentration around the dining table. We note, though, that the exigencies of commerce had already imposed a shift-system of meals in the Baudu family, separating Mme Baudu from her husband and daughter.

A notable reversal of this pattern occurs in Le Ventre de Paris, where again the intruder is a relative, Quenu's half-brother, Florent. As in La Conquête de Plassans, Zola offers several views of the dining-room, appropriately enough in a novel whose principal metaphor is food. The first description of the room sites it between kitchen and shop, the latter being described in detail, the former not at all. The dining-room acts as a transitional area, both for the importance of the descriptive passage associated with each place, and also between the preparation and selling of food. The colours of the shop, pink and white, clearly reflect both the pork products and Lisa, the owner's wife. The dining-room "très propre" like the shop, appears cold in its pale yellow colours of light oak and straw-bottomed chairs. The effect is prolonged by "la natte qui couvrait le parquet, le papier jaune tendre, la toile cirée imitant le chêne". [RM I p 653], with only the copper lamp to brighten the pale tones. Significance is clearly attributed to these colours in the next description, when Florent perceives them as symbolising the temptation of bourgeois values.

"La salle à manger jaune clair avait une netteté et une tiédeur bourgeoises qui l'amollissaient dès le seuil".

[ibid p 704]

The association of "jaune" and "cuivre" with money intensifies the underlying threat to Florent's idealism.

Later, the same décor assumes another function, critical of Florent's liaison with "la belle Normande", which Lisa sees as a rejection of her.

"La netteté de la salle à manger prenait un caractère aigu et cassant. Florent sentait un reproche, une sorte de condamnation dans le chêne clair, la lampe trop propre, la natte trop neuve".

[ibid p 743]

In other words, the associations of yellow are clarified by Zola - the jealousy of Félicité Rougon in La Fortune des Rougon is reflected by her salon, the "salon bouton d'or" of La Curée matches Renée's hair, but in Le Ventre de Paris, the light shades associated with cleanliness arouse reactions which seem purely subjective, springing only from the sensibility of Florent and varying according to his mood. Other than the original epithet of "froid", Zola himself passes no judgement on them, and the linking of the same room, with the same circle of diners, to such varied emotions suggests an arbitrariness on the part of the author, if not a perfunctory response to a personal code.

Far more frequent than actual descriptions of the rooms and their furniture are the evocations of the table setting, the focal point of the dining area. As in the case of the dining-rooms of La Conquête de Plassans and Le Ventre de Paris, Zola often shows the table at various stages of a meal. By presenting an evolving scene, he indicates the progressive changes in the appearance of the table and of the diners. A key word in this process is, as Borie⁽¹⁾ points out, "la débandade", or its equivalent verb "se débâter", used on several occasions to describe the end of a meal. [L'Assommoir RM II p 575, Une Page d'Amour RM II p 898, Nana RM II p 1181, Pot-Bouille RM III p 171 and p 188, L'Oeuvre RM IV p 330, L'Argent RM V p 22]. Other descriptions vary the phrase but imply the same result, as in "les débris" [La Curée RM I p 346], "le désordre" [Son Excellence Eugène Rougon RM II p 165], "la débâcle" [L'Assommoir RM II p 454]. This final disorder presupposes a transition from some initial state of order. Borie⁽¹⁾ sees an association between "la débandade" and

(1) op.cit p 166

intestinal disorder, relating it to his Freudian analysis of Zola's themes. The image may also have a sexual connotation, since, colloquially, "débander" refers to detumescence. Certainly, a relation of tension is implied, and perhaps a link between oral and genital gratification. Order and tension are brutally juxtaposed in the passage, listed above, from L'Oeuvre, where "la belle symétrie se débandait déjà" at Sandoz's dinner-table. The initial state of order is occasionally limited to a mere ritual listing of dishes, as in some examples already quoted, or of implements, as in Roubaud's preparation of the table in La Bête Humaine:

"Il prit, dans le buffet, des serviettes, des assiettes, des fourchettes et des couteaux, deux verres". [RM IV p 1000]

Zola is more likely, however, to introduce elements of symmetry and geometrical form in the setting of the tableware. Formality reigns at the beginning of a banquet, or in a refectory such as the staff dining-room of Au Bonheur des Dames.

"Sur la table, scellée d'un bout dans le mur et couverte d'une toile cirée, il n'y avait que les verres, les fourchettes et les couteaux, marquant les places. Des piles d'assiettes de rechange se dressaient à chaque extrémité; tandis que, au milieu, s'allongeait un gros pain, percé d'un couteau, le manche en l'air". [RM III p 544]

Zola contrives here to give the impression of a symmetrical and ordered arrangement of tableware without, in fact, insisting on the details. However, the negative "il n'y avait que" suggests incompleteness, an absence of something vital which becomes clear in the detail of the women's table, already provided with food. For once, order is shown to be insufficient. The women employees' table is more explicitly geometrical in its setting:

"On l'avait aménagée avec plus de confort. Sur la table ovale, placée au milieu, les quinze couverts s'espacèrent davantage, et le vin était dans des carafes; un plat de rale et un plat de boeuf à la sauce piquante tenaient les deux bouts". [ibid p 551]

This greater "confort" is not the only difference between the facilities offered to the two sexes. The men bring their food to the table, but the women have their plates ready before them and this, like the shape of the table,

perpetuates the traditional symbolism of round shapes as feminine, whereas the oblong table for men, bolted to the wall at one end, suggests an equally traditional phallic symbol of maleness, as does the bread speared by a knife. Notable, though is the elongation of the roundness of the women's table into an oval, which permits a more apparent symmetry in the placing of the serving dishes, possibly also oval. Similarly, the carafes of wine contrast with the knife in the bread in a distant echo of the Lance and the Grail symbols.

An important element in both these descriptions is the formality of the untouched table. The few details given of the men's table insist on the balance achieved by the piles of plates "à chaque extrémité", and the bread "au milieu", whilst the women's table, itself "au milieu" in its separate room, has its platters at the "deux bouts". The reader, conditioned to expect a mention of the centre of the table, feels unease at Zola's vagueness about the placing of the wine decanters - a departure from his normal, almost oppressive concern with balance and symmetry, which Allard had demonstrated in his work on L'Assommoir.⁽¹⁾

This element of formality recurs, as one would expect, in Zola's descriptions of banquets, and may be heightened in various ways. Thus, mirrors at Gervaise's wedding feast "allongeaient la table à l'infini". [L'Assommoir RM II p 451], and at the Emperor's banquet at Compiègne in Son Excellence Eugène Rougon, "tout un peuple de domestiques s'agitait sans une parole" increase the pomp and stiffness of the occasion. [RM II p 162].

Zola's most characteristic approach to the formally laid table is by way of metaphor and simile, emphasising the ritual nature of the meal. But sometimes the military language hints that the table is vulnerable to attack and that the meal is a battlefield. Thus, "[le] cordon des assiettes, l'armée des verres" in La Curée [RM I p 339] or "[le] cordon de lunes d'argent" formed by the plates at the Emperor's table. [Son Excellence Eugène Rougon RMII p 159].

* (1) Allard, *op.cit*

Most frequently, images of light and heat are evoked. Three descriptions may be quoted at some length.

"et le surtout, les grandes pièces semblaient des fontaines de feu; des éclairs couraient dans le flanc poli des réchauds; les fourchettes, les cuillers, les couteaux à manches de nacre, faisaient des barres de flammes; des arcs-en-ciel allumaient les verres; et, au milieu de cette pluie d'étincelles, dans cette masse incandescente, les carafes de vin tachaient de rouge la nappe chauffée à blanc".

[La Curée RM I p 339]

"Cinq lustres flambaient au-dessus de la longue table, allumant les pièces d'argenterie[.....]; les flancs des réchauds où se reflétait la braise des bougies, les cristaux ruisselants de gouttes de flammes, les corbeilles de fruits et les vases de fleurs d'un rose vif, faisaient du couvert impérial une splendeur dont la clarté flottante emplissait l'immense pièce".

[Son Excellence Eugène Rougon
RM II pp 159-180]

"Et la table surtout braisillait au milieu en chapelle ardente, sous la suspension garnie de bougies, avec la blancheur de sa nappe, qui détachait la belle ordonnance du couvert, les assiettes peintes, les verres taillés, les carafes blanches et rouges, les hors-d'oeuvre symétriques, rangés autour du bouquet central, une corbeille de roses pourpres".

[L'Oeuvre RM IV p 327]

The meal in L'Oeuvre is a small private dinner, the others both larger and more formal. All share the exuberance of Zola's transforming imagery, whilst remaining distinct from each other. The description of Sandoz's table in L'Oeuvre is the only passage devoted to the table itself in this episode, and hence contains all that Zola wishes to convey about both light and symmetry; the other short passages form elements of longer, fragmented evocations, and concentrate on the effects of light. In the passage quoted from La Curée, the fantasy on the theme of light progresses from the evocative "semblait" to more positive verbs: "couraient", "allumaient", "tachaient", the simile being gradually replaced by the metaphor. A balance is sought between light in movement ("fontaines de feu", "des éclairs couraient", "cette pluie d'étincelles") and stasis ("faisaient des barres de flammes", "tachaient de rouge"). No mention is made of sources of light other than the candles ("deux candélabres", each with "une torchère à dix branches"); the play of light differs from that of the "grande table", or that shed by the "suspension garnie de bougies" at

Sandoz's table. At Compiègne, Zola specifies the effect of the downward light on "les dames, les épaules nues, trempées de clarté". [RM II p 160]

A feature common to all these descriptions is the rendering of light in terms of fire or heat. Previously noted in the evocation of Nana's bed, the metaphor becomes insistent in Zola's descriptions of tables. The artificial light concentrated on them, the profusion of metallic surfaces, facilitate fantasies such as "fontaines de feu", "éclairs", "allumaient", "pluie d'étincelles", "masse incandescente", "la nappe chauffée à blanc", in the single sentence quoted from La Curée. A similar equation characterises the descriptions in Son Excellence Eugène Rougon ("flambaient", "allumaient", "la braise", "flammes") and L'Oeuvre ("braisillait", "chapelle ardente"). Such expressions may have a logical basis, since the light comes from flames in candles or lamps, but Zola's frequent transfer of the flame to inanimate objects suggests an element of danger, most powerful in the phrases "la nappe chauffée à blanc" and "braisillait", both of which refer to the table, not to the light.

The image of a "chapelle ardente", quoted here from L'Oeuvre, occurs also in an earlier part of the description of the banquet in La Curée, where the table

"était comme un autel, comme une chapelle ardente, où, sur la blancheur éclatante de la nappe, brûlaient les flammes claires des cristaux et des pièces d'argenterie".

[RM I p 338]

The table itself becomes an object of reverence, and, by implication, the meal will have an air of ritual. Similar quasi-religious imagery accompanies the description of Nana's bed, suggesting that both bed and table inspire awe, as altars of self-indulgence carried to extremes. In both cases, the sumptuous trappings govern the reader's response; in the case of the dining-tables, this is clearly one of admiration if not of envy.

This ritualistic element appears in the passage describing the entry of the Emperor's guests at Compiègne in Son Excellence Eugène Rougon:

"..... et sur les tapis, les jupes traînantes, espaçant les couples, donnaient une majesté de plus au défilé, qu'elles accompagnaient de leur murmure d'étoffes riches. C'était une approche presque tendre, une arrivée gourmande dans un milieu de luxe, de lumière, et de tiédeur, comme un bain sensuel ..."

[RM II p 160]

By its adjectives "sensuel" and "gourmande", the passage clearly links the reverence towards the imperial banquet with a sensual appreciation of its trappings, and also of the anticipated pleasures of eating.

The foregoing comments will have demonstrated that Zola frequently describes the progress of a meal, returning frequently to the spectacle of the table as it evolves from order to disorder, a technique which corresponds to such outdoor set pieces as the day at the races in Nana, or the cycle of the seasons in La Terre. The dinner-party, however, does not lend itself to a greatly varied treatment, since the positions of the guests are fixed, and the artificial lighting only slightly altered as time passes. Zola is able to add elements to the scene which would be denied to painters, notably fragmentary sounds, and notations of smells. Something approaching the impressions of his outdoor scenes can thus be achieved. Once more, La Curée provides examples which proved to be seminal.

"Les fleurs mettaient une fraîcheur dans l'air tiède. Des fumets légers traînaient, mêlés aux parfums des roses. Et c'était la senteur âpre des écrevisses et l'odeur aigrelette des citrons qui dominaient ... il y eut un bruit de chaises... que ne coupaient encore que les cliquetis assourdis des cuillers".

[RM I p 339]

Zola's well-known sensitivity to smell enables him to imagine clearly the contending aromas of the meal, which look forward to the virtuoso "symphonie des fromages" in Le Ventre de Paris, and find an echo in his finely-judged mention of the "tiédeur des serres qui développait l'odeur fine d'un ananas

coupé au fond d'une jatte de cristal" at Hennebeau's reception in Germinal. [RM III p 1310]. The reference, in La Curée, to "un demi-silence", broken only by the click of cutlery, anticipates similar moments in other works: the cessation of talk as the Empress laughs, in Son Excellence Eugene Rougon, or "une courte détente, au milieu du bruit cristallin des verres et du léger cliquetis des fourchettes" in L'Oeuvre [RM IV p 330]. Zola reminds us at such points that the dinner-party has its own rhythms and lulls, and is in fact subject to change, which he evokes in a variety of ways. Some examples of his attention to changes in temperature have already been noted; others exist, notably in the passages relating to the wedding breakfast in Pot-Bouille [RM III p 188], the staff dining-room in Au Bonheur des Dames [RM III p 547, p666]. Heat is also conveyed by the progressive thickening of the atmosphere as smoke, stale odours and breath begin to blur the clear-cut outlines of the table. In the course of the wedding breakfast in L'Assommoir, Zola describes this effect twice.

"le reflet des arbres, dans ce coin humide, verdissait la salle enfumée, faisait danser des ombres de feuilles au-dessus de la nappe..."

[RM II p 451]

"Dans la salle, le reflet verdâtre s'épaississait des buées montant de la table".

[ibid p 454]

A progression is evident, in Zola's differing emphasis in the elements of "vert" and "épais", the verbal forms of each being prominent in turn.

A similar indoor effect at Nana's house-warming, where, of course, "il faisait trop chaud", shows how "la clarté des bougies jaunissait encore, épaissie, au-dessus de la table" [Nana RM II p 1181]. In Au Bonheur des Dames, "l'étroit caveau s'emplissait d'une vapeur rousse" [RM III p 547], or later in the same novel, "des reflets d'or jaunissaient le plafond, baignant d'une lumière rousse les convives en nage" [ibid p 666]. The "reflets" here are caused by the blinds lowered against the sun, and a similarly logical explanation accounts for

the "lente vapeur bleue" over the Sandoz's table in L'Oeuvre - "on fumait", this being an informal private party [RM IV p 302].

The clearest indication of the evolution of a meal comes from the transition from the ordered state of the opening to the "débandade" of the end. The Saccard dinner party once more provides a template for future descriptions.

X "Cependant, les convives ne mangeaient plus. Un vent chaud semblait avoir soufflé sur la table, terni les verres, émietté le pain, noirci les pelures de fruit dans les assiettes, rompu la belle symétrie du service. Les fleurs se fanaient dans les grands cornets d'argent ciselé".

[RM I p 346]

Zola seems to link the heat - "un vent chaud" - with the devastation of the orderly table presented a few pages earlier. Zola's sentences highlight the participles of destruction: "terni ... émietté ... noirci ... rompu", all of them indicating a passage from an earlier state. Similar details of food debris, more grossly evident, occur notably in descriptions of working-class meals. The table at the end of Gervaise's wedding-meal, "tachée de vin et de sauce, encombrée de la débâcle du couvert", the bottles and dishes piled up like "les ordures balayées et culbutées de la nappe" present a more brutal image of the physicality of eating than the fruit peel of La Curée, but the difference is largely one of degree [L'Assommoir RM II p 454]. A virtual replica of this confusion at the end of a meal occurs at Gervaise's name-day feast in the same novel.

"Quand Augustine posa deux lampes allumées, une à chaque bout de la table, la débandade du couvert apparut sous la vive clarté, les assiettes et les fourchettes grasses, la nappe tachée de vin, couverte de miettes".

[ibid p 575]

Noting in passing Zola's care to balance the picture in the placing of the lamps, and the sudden importance of light, as in other, more bourgeois settings, it can be seen that striking parallels exist between the two meals in the overall plan of the novel. Zola uses enough variation to avoid the accusation of mechanical clichés in his writing. Thus, the two passages reveal

"la débâcle du couvert ... la débandade du couvert ... la table tachée de vin et de sauce ... la nappe tachée de vin ... les assiettes

sales ... les assiettes et les fourchettes grasses ... les ordures ... les miettes."

Even more sordid is the picture of the restaurant of the Salon after the opening of the exhibition of L'Oeuvre: "un saccage d'os et de crôûtes", where waiters swill the tables, or rake the sand "trempé de crachats, sali de miettes" [RM IV p 304]. Zola has already, it has been noted, evoked the vulgar promiscuity of the crowded restaurant, of which this unlovely tableau is the result. So far, consideration of these scenes has omitted the diners, but it might be supposed that an evolution similar to that of the table itself exists in the attitudes and behaviour of the guests. This is indeed so, the general movement being from a state of animation to a post-prandial torpor, sometimes to intoxication. The prevalence of this pattern, from the court at Compiègne to the slums of Paris, implies that the same appetites govern the whole of society.

La Curée offers a typical example of this torpor. As the Saccards' dinner party draws to its close, "les convives ne mangeaient plus ... Les rires étaient tombés, les paroles se faisaient rares". [RM I p 346] At court, too, the meal peters out.

X "C'était la fin. Quelques dames mangeaient encore un biscuit, à demi renversées sur leurs chaises".
[RM II p 164]

In the case of the shopmen in Au Bonheur des Dames, a managerial policy forbidding employees to leave the shop during their meal break artificially prolongs the time spent at table, and rationalises Zola's picture of those who "restaient alanguis devant la table", ignoring the "vaisselle grasse", and who "roulaient des boulettes de mie de pain, revenaient sur les mêmes histoires". [RM III p 550]

A further symptom of the ending of the meal is a feeling of discomfort, often noted by Zola as a flush of heat. Renée's guests, ladies especially,

"sentaient des moiteurs leur monter au front et à la nuque" [La Curée RM I p 346], whilst the shop employees feel "la chaleur d'été qui leur rougissait les oreilles". [Au Bonheur des Dames RM III p 550] In lower-class circles, discomfort leads diners to seek relief, in ways which clearly indicate the relaxation of social etiquette. Guests at Gervaise's wedding "retirèrent leurs redingotes et continuaient à manger en manches de chemise", [L'Assommoir RM II p 454], a familiarity carried further at her name-day feast. "Les hommes déboutonnaient leur gilet, les dames s'essuyaient la figure avec leurs serviettes". [ibid p 575] Nana's housewarming party witnesses a similar, more restrained, change in behaviour. Zola notes that "on finissait par se moins bien tenir":

"Les femmes s'accoudaient en face de la débandade du couvert; les hommes, pour respirer, reculaient leur chaise".

[Nana RM II p 1181]

The least refined of all these festivities, Buteau's wedding in La Terre, sees the most carnal behaviour, excusable perhaps in a family gathering.

"Et, dans l'abandon de l'ivresse croissante, les agrafes des corsages défaites, les boucles des pantalons lâchées, on changeait de place, on causait par petits groupes autour de la table, grasse de sauce, maculée de vin".

[RM IV p 527]

From the need to alleviate a feeling of discomfort, it is but a short step to the modification of an individual's behaviour by the influence of the meal. Renée in La Curée finds that the "pensées bourgeoises" which assailed her in the Parc Monceau have been dispelled by the luxury and abundance of the dinner at which she has presided, and which has offered an insight into her latent jealousy of Maxime's intended bride Louise. [RM I p 347] Florent, in Le Ventre de Paris, feels the opposite effect. The bourgeois values of the Quenu household overwhelm and intimidate him, exemplified as they are by the dining-room.

"Il l'écoutait, l'assiette pleine, gagné malgré lui par la propreté dévote de la salle à manger; la natte mettait une mollesse sous ses pieds; les luisants de la suspension de cuivre, le jaune tendre du papier peint et du chêne clair des meubles, le pénétraient d'un sentiment d'honnêteté dans le bien-être, qui troublait ses idées du faux et du vrai"

[RM pp 681-2]

Here, Florent anticipates Quenu's reaction as he contemplates the conjugal bedroom, in an example quoted earlier.

Against such instances of abundance and luxury as the banquets of La Curée and Son Excellence Eugène Rougon, or the more bourgeois but still well-furnished tables of L'Oeuvre and Le Ventre de Paris, must be set those dining-rooms where frugality reigns. Often, the greatest interest arises from the atmosphere of the meal, perhaps a simple collation. Thus, in an example already studied, Rougon's tête-à-tête with Clorinde is simple in its menu, but accompanied by an elaborate ritual of service, and set in the impressive surrounding of the Ministère de l'Intérieur. Clorinde's reaction gives point to the episode:

"-Quelle halle! murmurait-elle, en allant au fond de la pièce.
C'est un salon pour noces et repas de corps, votre salle à manger!"

[Son Excellence Eugène Rougon
RM II p 233]

Zola contrives a contrast between the coltish high spirits of the young artists who eat in Sandoz's kitchen, the enthusiasm of the same men in early maturity when invited by Sandoz after his marriage, and their sober and sometimes embittered early middle age at the bourgeois meal some years later, at the height of Sandoz's success. [L'Oeuvre RM IV pp 80-1, pp 191-2, pp 327-30], the three meals marking a passage from frugality to refinement and abundance, and illustrating the 'embourgeoisement' of Sandoz.

The frugality of the Baudu family's meals in the early pages of Au Bonheur des Dames, on the other hand, sets the tone for the whole atmosphere of the old shop throughout the novel. The unexpected arrival of three extra diners would sufficiently explain the careful measuring of portions, but Zola's comment makes it clear that this is Baudu's habit. He cuts the joint

"avec une prudence et adresse de patron, pesant les minces parts d'un coup d'oeil, à un gramme près", and his remark about Jean's appetite reveals his attention to the appetites of his family and employees: "s'il travaille autant qu'il mange, ça fera un rude homme" [RM III p 399]. Related to this frugality are the atmosphere of the adjoining shop, the depressed air of the Baudu family, and the darkness of the rooms, which affects the newcomer Denise and seems to sum up the defeat of her uncle's life.

In sharp contrast to this depressed frugality is the meal shared in Clotilde's bedroom in Le Docteur Pascal, where the lovers keep poverty and despair at bay.

"Ils s'enfermèrent, ils mirent le couvert sur une petite table, les pommes de terre au milieu, entre la salière et la carafe, et le panier de raisin sur une chaise à côté. Et ce fut un gala merveilleux, qui leur rappela l'exquis déjeuner qu'ils avaient fait au lendemain des nocés."

[RM I p 1127]

Zola's careful notation of the table-setting, with its attention to balance, does not surprise us, but the siting of the meal in Clotilde's room has significance, as will be seen. This room is the focal point of the house, and its simple opulence, contrasted with the bleakness of Pascal's room, warns us that the frugal meal does not constitute a true counterpart to Zola's evocation of austerity in bedrooms, as discussed earlier under the general term of "la cellule": once more, it is the atmosphere of the meal that interests Zola, rather than the scale of the provision of food.

The most evident link between austere sleeping-quarters and frugal meals lies rather in the scenes of regimented eating occurring in two novels. The refectories of La Faute de L'Abbé Mouret and Au Bonheur des Dames can clearly be seen as the counterparts of the cell-like rooms of both seminarists and shop-girls, and the meals in the shop are regulated by bells as are those in the seminary. However, the meals are a communal experience, whereas the cell-room

acts as an isolation area, and this communal eating, as so often in Zola's novels, signals danger and disgust. He notes the unbridled gluttony, contrasting this with the poor quality and meagre quantity of the foods provided. Indeed, Zola concludes his evocation of the seminarists' meals with the phrase "cette rage d'appétit", thereby inviting comparison with the 'civilised' almost restrained approach by the wealthy to the loaded tables of their banquets. The power of appetites is more nakedly displayed by those whose lives are austere. Zola notes only the noises of the eating seminarists - "des bruits terribles de mâchoires", "un silence glouton, un acharnement de fourchettes" - but points out too, the envy directed at the more privileged leaders of the community. [La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret RM I p 1299] Similarly, as has already been shown, there is a hierarchy of comfort, separating female from male employees at Mouret's shop, as has been shown, though both eat the same food. Zola concentrates on showing the male diners: "une goinfrerie de grands gaillards aux estomacs creusés par treize heures de fatigues quotidiennes" [Au Bonheur des Dames RM III p 545], with a similar stress on the noises of the diners, "un tapage violent de fourchettes" [ibid], and later,

"un cliquetis grandissant de fourchettes, des glouglous de bouteilles qu'on vidait, des chocs de verres reposés trop vivement, le bruit de meule de cinq cents mâchoires solides broyant avec énergie".

[ibid p 665]

The noise of forks, "un cliquetis" is noted in banquet scenes already quoted, accompanied by the epithet "léger"; here, it is "grandissant", and the remaining details of sounds would not be appropriate to the restraint of the meals of high society gatherings.

Significantly, this latter description of the greedy shopmen occurs as Zola shows us the enlarged and greatly improved staff canteen, where he insists on the vast scale of the catering, and includes a somewhat contrived view of

the kitchens, "cette cuisine de phalanstère" [ibid p 663]. This dining-hall, the better menus, the more efficient service, all form an essential part of the fourierist society towards which the "Bonheur" is evolving. Yet Zola seems to cling to the concept of mass eating as an unpleasant necessity, since he contrives to set the scene on a hot day, with sunlight and heat causing discomfort in the refectory. The initial view offered to the reader already emphasises the tension between the positive elements of the hall - "De grandes fenêtres [.....] éclairaient d'une clarté blanche cette galerie" - and those which Zola seeks out as, possibly (in the use of "semblait") still unacceptable: "le plafond, malgré ses quatre mètres de hauteur, semblait bas, écrasé", an impression created by "le développement démesuré des autres dimensions". [ibid p 664] Zola does not criticise the refectory for qualities which to us might seem dehumanising. The vast, impersonal, factory-like atmosphere of the place is presumably admired as part of the "gigantisme" of the whole store. His unease at the notion of communal eating, betrayed by his attempt to create a feeling of oppression in the very proportions of the rooms, becomes more evident in his evocation of this summer day of stocktaking. The effect of discomfort is revealed by smoke and haze in the still air.

"Les tasses fumaient, des visages en sueur luisaient sous les vapeurs légères, flottantes comme des nuées bleues de cigarettes. Aux fenêtres, les stores tombaient, immobiles, sans un battement".

[ibid p 668]

As one of those blinds flies up, Zola's eye for the clinching detail is revealed; "une nappe de soleil traversa la salle, incendia le plafond", [ibid], since the sudden inrush of sunlight emphasises the closed, airless room, and the words "nappe" and "incendia" create parallels with the tables and the heat arising from them, recalling the imagery of fire in the elaborate descriptions of banquets in other novels.

Like Sandoz's domestic catering, the meals at the big store have changed in character with the passing of time. Although Zola elects to describe

a special day (stocktaking, when no customers enter the store) to present a special menu, the improvement in standards has not led to greater refinement of manners. In this, the shopmen are paralleled by the customers, when Mouret instals a free buffet for them. The behaviour of the bourgeois ladies when offered free refreshments provides an enlightening comment on the acquisitiveness of that stratum of society, as well as a parallel to their behaviour at the shop counters - yet another instance of the role of appetite in Second Empire society. If the famished, hard-working store employees fling themselves on their food for legitimate reasons, the customers have no such excuse.

"Des personnes, perdant tout scrupule devant ces gourmandises gratuites, se rendaient malades". [ibid p 623]

And, as so often in his descriptions of food and drink, Zola returns to the same as the frenzy of the shoppers mounts:

"maintenant la clientèle s'y ruait dans une rage d'appétit, les mères elles-mêmes s'y gorgeaient de malaga". [ibid p 642]

Zola lists the sheer quantities consumed: "quatre-vingts litres de sirop et soixante-dix bouteilles de vin" [ibid], a further aspect of his love of "gigantisme" to which this novel allows free rein. The buffet offers to customers the appearance of an opportunity for revenge, a means of apparently recouping some of the money charmed from their purses.

Beyond this, however, the free buffet at "Au Bonheur des Dames" reveals, not for the first time in the Rougon-Macquart novels, that the informal buffet has the greatest potential for the unleashing of appetites. The tête-à-tête meal is essentially intimate, the banquet necessarily static. The buffet, however, gives scope for manoeuvres, for the display of aggressive and acquisitive techniques. Obtaining food becomes a social accomplishment, at which the least scrupulous will succeed best, and the ladies exert social pressures on the men to obtain what they want. The aim of all this is to

consume food and drink in conditions of some discomfort. Certainly, the buffet at Saccard's ball in La Curée provides a model of the acquisitive and unscrupulous society for which it caters. "C'était un pillage", Zola tells us, and offers as his last image of it, "cette pièce qu'une bande de loups semblait avoir traversée". [RM I p 557, p 565] The veneer of civilised behaviour quickly rubs off in "la seule crainte d'arriver trop tard et de trouver les plats vides" [ibid p 558]. Dignitaries such as the Préfet reveal their predatory skills:

Le préfet guettait un gigot. Il allongea la main, au bon moment, dans une éclaircie d'épaules, et l'emporta tranquillement, après s'être bourré les poches de petits pains"

[ibid]

The vulgarians Mignon and Charrier reveal their coarseness by their behaviour - "ils causaient, la bouche pleine, écartant le menton de leur gilet pour que le jus tombât sur le tapis". [ibid]

Gallantry towards women can be revived by a direct appeal, as Mme d'Espanet discovers, but not before she has been "obligée d'insister du coude pour s'ouvrir un passage". [ibid p 559] Natures stand revealed or confirmed by eating techniques - Mme d'Espanet "mangeait avec des mains délicates" [ibid], whereas Sidonie Rougon "mangea debout, comme un homme", and "se versa du malaga", without help from a man, [ibid p 560], and Mme Michelin, surrounded by men as always, "prenait des petits fours de toutes les mains" [ibid]. Zola perceives that all these, and others, display at the buffet the very characteristics which enable them to survive in society.

Significantly, the only formal meal to show such aggressive behaviour on the part of the guests is the children's party in Une Page d'Amour. Zola's picture of the children, "s'oubliant parfois dans des incartades de jeunes sauvages" clearly uses elements found in other, more restrained gatherings, and exaggerates them to reveal the basic appetites present at even the most formal meal.

"Tous ces museaux roses croquaient à belles dents blanches[....]
Ils prenaient leurs verres à deux mains pour boire jusqu'au fond,
se barbouillaient, tachaient leurs costumes [.....] on pillait
les dernières assiettes".

[RM II p 897]

Here, as in so many of his descriptions of dining-room scenes, Zola follows a pattern he has established, and which may be summarised thus: the table has far greater importance than the room in which it is laid, and the initial evocation of order, in some cases of splendour, is a prelude to inevitable decline. The meal progresses towards a state of disorder, reflected in the behaviour of the diners, except at the Emperor's court. This consistent pattern confirms two interpretations of Zola's presentation of meals. His negative attitude towards eating, and particularly towards eating in groups or crowds, functions as a sub-text to the novels, rather than as one of Zola's proclaimed intentions. His view of social behaviour as a veneer, covering base appetites and their gratification, is more obviously displayed in many episodes, and ultimately in La Débâcle. The last novel of the series to be actually set in the Second Empire, La Débâcle allows Zola to show, in one example of the breakdown of social patterns under the stress of war, a final picture of the appetites which, in his view, had undermined France. It is thus appropriate that the last formal meal to be described in the whole series of novels should convey, in accelerated form, this same transition from order to disorder, perhaps as another image of the impending collapse of the Empire.

Zola shows the Emperor himself, a changed man since the banquet at Compiègne or the reception in La Curée. He dines alone, in a "pièce bourgeoise et froide", his little table "éclairée à chaque bout d'un flambeau". This concern for balance, as one aspect of order, is by now familiar, and some semblance of regal formality is maintained by the presence of two aides and a maître d'hôtel - echoes of the armies of servants at Compiègne, and of the pair who waited on Rougon and Clorinde in their vast dining-room. But the meal is a sham.

"Et le verre n'avait pas servi, le pain n'avait pas été touché,
un blanc de poulet refroidissait au milieu de l'assiette".
[RM V p 495]

The "appétit", in its most literal form, has gone. The scene changes rapidly to one of pillage, witnessed by Maurice. This is the other face of the imperial retinue, as discipline breaks down, and the Emperor's loss of appetite unleashes the frenzy of others, the image of the "curée" which recurs in other novels than the one of that name:

"et il aperçut, dans le braisillement des bougies et la
fumée des plats, une tablée d'écuyers, d'aides de camp, de
chambellans, en train de vider les bouteilles des fourgons,
d'engloutir les volailles et de torcher les sauces, au milieu
de grands éclats de voix". [ibid p 496]

Familiar words emerge: "le braisillement des bougies", "la fumée des plats", but the manners of Gervaise's guests are here shown at the highest levels of Imperial society. The restraint of the formal banquet has gone, the "lous sauvages" of the buffet in La Curée are once more in possession of the field.

SALONS IN LES ROUGON-MACQUART

The bedroom and the dining-room retain, broadly speaking, their original function throughout the Rougon-Macquart series, since they correspond to basic human functions - eating, sleeping, and, sometimes, sex. The third room to be considered in the present study has no such polarity. The salon fulfils no definite purpose, it has not established for itself any function which would normally exclude all others, and be exclusive to it. The salon has thus become the most versatile of rooms, easily transformed into a work-room (L'Argent), store-room (Le Docteur Pascal), display-room (Le Rêve) and, most frequently, ballroom. Indeed, this latter function assumes such importance in several novels of the series that the ballroom may be treated as a sub-genre of the salon.

The salon is thus the least necessary of domestic rooms. Several bourgeois families dispense with it altogether, both in the novels cited above, and in others mentioned in earlier sections, the Chanteau and Mouret families notably. In these cases, the life of the household centres on another room, usually the dining-room, but, in the case of Le Docteur Pascal, a bedroom. It should be noted that each of these families - Mouret, Chanteau, Hubert, Hamelin and the Pascal-Clotilde couple - ~~Form~~ close-knit, self-sufficient groups needing little contact with outsiders, initially at least.

We would not expect to find a salon in the homes of Zola's working-class characters. However, the lower middle classes of Victorian fiction set great store by their "parlour" as the mirror of their respectability and aspirations, and the lack of its equivalent in Zola is perhaps surprising. Most noticeably, the well-to-do folk in La Terre seem to have no salon. Fanny Delhomme upbraids her father for spilling drink in her kitchen, though a salon would be a more plausible source of pride [RM IV p 616]. The prosperous brothel-keepers, M. and Mme. Charles, receive Jean in their dining-room, where the comedy of

Elodie's engagement is also played out [ibid p 783]. Again, a salon could be considered a more suitable venue. It may be that the absence of a salon in Beauceron villages was a sociological fact, but it tends to confirm the salon as a mark of the urban bourgeois classes. Even in provincial Plassans, Félicité Rougon values her salon highly, and in the remote Nord, Hennebeau's status assures for him a salon which the miners' delegation in Germinal finds intimidating.

The refusal of such admirable bourgeois as the Hamelins in L'Argent, the Huberts in Le Rêve, and, especially, Pascal Rougon, to use their designated 'salon' for socialising directs our attention to those characters for whom the salon is an important part of their lives. The principal salons in the Rougon-Macquart novels are those of Félicité Rougon, Renée Saccard, Juliette Deberle (in Une Page d'Amour), Sabine Muffat and Henriette Desforges (in Au Bonheur des Dames), each of which is the theatre of important encounters in the novel, and is described more than once. The linking factor seems to be Zola's disapproval, on various grounds, of the hostess. Juliette Deberle, introduced to the readers in her salon, reveals herself as empty-headed, the "poupée parisienne" of much nineteenth century fiction. Zola establishes a contrast between Juliette and the heroine Hélène (whose flat does not boast a salon!) in much the same way as Henriette Desforges acts as a counterweight to Denise Baudu. Zola's criticism of Félicité, Renée and Sabine need hardly be stressed.

Noteworthy, too, is the feminine character of these salons. Such a statement may seem obvious, since social convention equates the salon with its hostess, but Zola flouts this convention at least once: he makes Félicité Rougon, rather than her husband, the driving force behind the political gatherings in their salon, despite its apparently exclusively masculine membership. Elsewhere, the salon acts as a focus for the feminine elements of the novel. Occasional mention is made of its male counterpart, notably Saccard's 'fumoir' in La Curée, but Zola most frequently describes a salon full of ladies, whether as a retiring room after a banquet, as in La Curée, or as the scene of a

continually changing series of encounters, such as Mme Deberle's 'at home' in Une Page d'Amour.

Into this largely feminine society, Zola frequently introduces a limited masculine element. In this respect, as in many others, as will be shown, Félicité's salon is atypical. La Curée depicts a salon barely disturbed by masculine intrusion, since the men permitted to be present are the invalid and senile Baron Gouraud and the epicene Maxime. Juliette Deberle's small son Lucien equally poses no threat, but her involvement with the apparently harmless Malignon later provides an important strand of the plot. Sabine Muffat's husband frequents his wife's salon, as do many other admirers of Nana; indeed, the Muffat salon receives a number of males unprecedented in the Rougon-Macquart novels. Once again, as in the case of Juliette Deberle, the hostess receives a man - the journalist Fauchery - who will cause her to decline from her earlier moral standards.

In many ways, Henriette Desforges' salon in Au Bonheur des Dames is the most interesting of all those described by Zola, since it combines many elements from earlier descriptions. The dominant presence of one man emphasises the pettiness, the 'papotage' of the ladies' talk. Like Félicité, Henriette uses her salon as a theatre of diplomacy, in her efforts to retain Octave's affections, firstly by introducing him to the financier Hartmann, later by forcing him to see Denise's humiliating vigil in the antechamber, and, later, she seeks revenge by covertly supporting Bouthemont's aspirations to found his own store. Here too, as at the Muffat's salon, other men are present, but beside Octave Mouret, they are revealed as spineless (Paul de Vallagnosc), failures (M. Marty) or mere sensualists (M. de Boves). Only Baron Hartmann measures up to Octave, and their conversation is channelled off into the more private 'petit salon'.

This use of the 'petit salon' leads us to review the actual provision of such rooms in Zola's bourgeois interiors, and it soon becomes evident that the richer bourgeois ladies possess two salons. Most frequently, Zola provides the double salon when the plot requires the transformation of the larger room for some function; the balls in La Curée and Une Page d'Amour, Mme Duveyrier's musical evenings in Pot-Bouille. The impression of bourgeois opulence and extravagance is thus reinforced. However, Mme Desforges receives her guests - ladies of her regular circle - in the 'grand salon', thus enabling Octave to use the smaller adjoining salon as a private business room for his discussion with Hartmann, and also for his revelatory exchanges with de Vallagnosc. This reversal of the more usual siting of receptions in the 'petit salon' is all the more striking if we recall that Octave in earlier days could receive only whispered information from Trublott at the Duveyriers' musical evening; no question then of using the 'petit salon'. Zola's decision to divide the action of Ch. III of Au Bonheur des Dames between the two salons emphasises the relationship between Octave and Henriette. Before the guests arrive, Henriette is shown in tête à tête with her lover, Octave, and reduced to a subterfuge in order to preserve appearances. After instructing him: "Entre derrière moi", Henriette, now speaking to her friends,

"ajouta de son air gai:

- Entrez donc, Monsieur Mouret, passez par le petit salon.
Ce sera moins solennel".

[RM III p 445]

One further point must be made about Henriette Desforges' salon; the nature of the socialising which takes place there. Henriette's women friends offer a range of bourgeois types, extending upwards into the minor nobility (Mme de Boves). They constitute, as the novelist intends to demonstrate, the backbone of the clientèle of the new department stores, and as such are seen by Mouret as his "conquests". Zola transmutes their constant talk of clothes, materials and prices into an erotic encounter, seeing, in the thrill of handling materials (Henriette's fan, Mme Marty's lace) and in the excitement of

describing clothes, a kind of pornography. The undercurrent of real eroticism, though submerged by other elements of description which will be detailed later, is nevertheless clearly present in Henriette's liaison with Octave, in her match-making between Paul and Berthe de Boves, and in M. de Boves's nascent passion for Mme de Guibal. It is by the presence of such elements that Zola's evocation of Mme Desforges's salon, the last one to be extensively described in the whole series of novels ⁽¹⁾, sets the seal on his perception of the salon as a "lieu de jouissance".

In his descriptions of the salons themselves, as opposed to the action of the novel for which they provide a setting, Zola seems to seek, above all, to convey a sense of atmosphere. Despite similarities, which will become apparent, the salon of each hostess naturally reflects something of her personality. Mention may be made here of the yellow-green furnishings of Félicité Rougon's salon, clearly indicative of the envy which motivates her politicking. It is proposed, however, to defer a detailed examination of Zola's descriptions of this room, despite the primacy of Félicité's salon in the Rougon-Macquart series; the Rougon salon is exceptional in character and function, and may be more fruitfully evaluated after consideration of the more feminine salons of Zola's novels. Once more, La Curée proves to be the truly seminal work. Zola's descriptions of Renée's 'petit salon' and of the ballroom which the 'grand salon' becomes, provide patterns by which a wide range of later material may be measured.

Zola situates the 'petit salon' and the 'fumoir' at opposite ends of the Saccards' 'grand salon', thereby establishing for the reader a separation of interests and spheres of influence between Renée and her husband, a pattern adhered to in the siting of their bedrooms immediately above their respective 'dens'. Zola's qualification of the 'grand salon' as "une sorte de galerie" [RM I p 348] stresses its lack of specific character, but the author pays great

(1) Isolated examples appear briefly in later novels, notably the Hennebeaus' salon in Germinal, but Au Bonheur des Dames is, with the partial exception of L'Argent, the last of the 'grande bourgeoisie' novels.

attention to the decorative features of the room. It echoes the facade of the mansion in its ornateness, the basic décor of "panneaux, tendus de soie rouge" [ibid] and of mirrors being overlaid by a profusion of metallic flowers and tendrils:

"des filets, pareils à des jets de métal en fusion, coulaient sur les murs, encadrant les panneaux [...], des tresses de roses, avec des gerbes épanouies au sommet, retombaient le long des glaces".

[ibid]

In this 'public' room, linking their two 'private' retreats, husband and wife proclaim their superficial unity in the conjunction of their two personal symbols, the flower for Renée,⁽¹⁾ and gold for Aristide. Zola's image of the rich furnishings which "suaient l'or, égouttaient l'or" [ibid] reflects not so much the literal presence of gold in the trappings of the room as a prolongation of the symbolic power of gold. The verbs "suer" and "égoutter" establish a downward movement echoed by the lamps which, though they "se dressaient" in each corner, were attached by gold-plated chains "tombant avec des grâces symétriques" [ibid] and by three chandeliers which "descendaient" [ibid] and which Zola describes as "ruisselant de gouttes de lumière bleues et roses" [ibid]. Underfoot, receiving this downward trend, "un tapis d'Aubusson étalait ses fleurs de pourpre" [ibid] - Renée's symbol, rich but lowly in relation to her husband's wealth. Otherwise, Zola's catalogue of furnishings seems heteroclite - a conventional relaying of status-symbols rather than a carefully-orchestrated series of notations such as has been discovered elsewhere in La Curée.

Indeed, Zola appears to attach little importance to the "grand salon" as such, returning to it when its character has changed to that of theatre and ballroom. His characters do not linger there: "Les hommes se retirèrent bientôt

(1) Zola's proclaimed identification of Renée with flesh in his description of La Curée as "la note de l'or et de la chair" among his novels, is certainly important in the symbolic textures surrounding her as analysis of her bedroom shows. At the same time, she is frequently associated with flowers (the hothouse plants, her carnation-like gown, the dress she wears at her Ch. I dinner-party) and with heat (she is "frileuse", maintains a blazing fire, prefers the hothouse, owns bearskin rugs and has sun-coloured hair).

dans le fumoir" [ibid] of which Zola provides a brief description [ibid p 349] before presenting, in greater detail, Renée's private salon. Whereas the smoking-room conveys nothing of Aristide but his wealth, the "petit salon", like her bedroom, announces Renée's personality - or that part of it which she chooses to reveal to her circle. The wooden items of furniture are, again, conventional, barely listed, since Zola prefers to concentrate on textures and colours. The tones are yellow, but, unlike the envy symbolised by Félicité's yellowish salon, the suggestion here is of brightness and warmth, positing another symbol of Renée herself - heat. "Soleil", "ruissellement de rayons", "coucher d'astre" are evoked [ibid p 350] and the yellow tones correspond in a baudelairean sense to the occupant, enhancing her complexion and hair colouring, "la doraiant de flammes étranges" [ibid p 351]. The flower imagery returns, in the buttercup hue of the soft furnishings, and the "tulipes voyantes" [ibid p 350] embroidered on the chairs. In addition, Zola notes "une énorme gerbe de fleurs", and the room communicates with the hothouse. More curiously, the Aubusson carpet here has dead leaves as its pattern; like Renée's flower-symbol on the carpet of the "grand salon", the pattern here is subservient to the triumph of gold, but now prefigures her downfall.

Zola's initial characterisation of the "petit salon" speaks of its "charme voluptueux", its "saveur originale et exquise" [ibid]. The evocation in more precise terms of this atmosphere becomes paramount in the text which follows. Besides the details already noted, Zola insists on the subtle harmonies of colour, the "Symphonie en jaune mineur", in direct homage to Gautier's famous "Symphonie en blanc mineur". Voluptuousness reigns in the softness and lowness of seats, hard-edged furniture is disposed of in a mere list. The author focuses attention on "les causeuses, les fauteuils, les poufs [...] des sièges bas, des sièges volants, toutes les variétés élégantes et bizarres du tabouret" [ibid]. The reader feels the room to be dominated by these voluptuous seats - it is, after all, only the "petit salon" - which go far beyond the list provided for the "fumoir", of corresponding dimensions. Imagery leads the author to

the next stage of his evocation, that of the "petit salon" as surrogate bedroom.

"Les dossiers se renversaient avec des rondeurs moelleuses de traversins. C'était comme des lits discrets où l'on pouvait dormir et aimer dans le duvet ..."

[ibid pp 350-51]

Not only does this furniture without angles ("on ne voyait pas le bois de ces meubles; le satin, le capiton couvrait tout") anticipate the similarly padded bedroom, already analysed, but also it evokes such diverse images as Renée's carriage, in which she has already been seen "allongée ... comme dans une chaise longue de convalescente" [ibid pp 319-20], the "large divan, un véritable lit" at the café Riche [ibid p 448], and, distantly, the shape of the crinoline as Renée curtseys to the Emperor, or as the ladies sink to the ground in the "Guerre du Mexique" figure of the cotillon [ibid p 578].

Mme Juliette Deberle, in Une Page d'Amour, occupies a social rank less elevated than Renée Saccard, but her two salons proclaim her standing in the elegant suburb of Passy. Of her "petit salon", Zola vouchsafes only its colour scheme, "aux tentures et aux meubles réséda" [RM II p 811], since Mme Deberle is "at home" in her "grand salon". As this will later be the scene of the children's ball, Zola seems to prefer to concentrate his descriptive powers on the larger room, with its "jaune et or, d'un éclat extraordinaire" [ibid p 812]. As in La Curée, he notes the "éblouissement d'astre" conferred by the yellow colour, [ibid p 813] the presence of real flowers and the proximity of the garden, which corresponds to Renée's hothouse. Here, real heat replaces imagery:

"Il faisait très chaud, une chaleur égale de calorifère; dans la cheminée, une seule bûche se réduisait en braise".

[ibid]

To this, Zola adds "un parfum très pénétrant" from hyacinths [ibid p 814], compounding, as often in his descriptions, his sensitivity to temperatures with his well-known olfactory powers.

As in the case of Renée, the décor emphasises the best features of the hostess.

Hélène, the observant newcomer, is quick to see that Juliette's black hair and pale complexion are set off by "le flamboiement du salon", where "son teint pâle se dorait d'un reflet vermeil" [ibid p 813]. Juliette uses a simple contrast, whereas Renée, characteristically, takes a risk in choosing a colour-scheme very similar to that of her unusual hair colouring. Equally characteristically, this "étrange" décor works in her favour, whereas Juliette's choice reflects a more conventional personality, one which will back away from carrying a flirtation too far.

Nana, with its parallels between high society and the demi-monde, might be expected to provide revealingly contrasted descriptions of salons. But, just as Zola refrains from describing Blanche Muller's salon, visited by Renée in La Curée, so he avoids a picture of Nana's salon in Ch. IV, since the caterers have transformed it into a dining-room; yet another example of the versatility of the salon in Zola's world. Indeed, as Nana passes from apartment to country house, to a ménage with Fontan and to her "hôtel particulier", she is rarely glimpsed in her salons. Sabine Muffat, her counterpart in high society, may be said to have two salons, though ~~they are, in fact,~~ very different stages of the evolution of the same room. As first seen, the Muffat salon evokes the dreary but morally impeccable world of the hôtel Béraud in La Curée. Like Mme Deberle, Sabine Muffat receives guests in the "grand salon", though Zola's logic here seems puzzling:

"Lorsqu'elle n'attendait que des intimes, la comtesse n'ouvrait ni le petit salon ni la salle à manger. On était plus entre soi..."
[Nana RM II p 1144]

Thus, the 'petit salon' remain unseen, and our first glimpse of the 'grand salon' with "à peine une douzaine de personnes" [ibid] emphasises its dreariness; with the same numbers present, the "petit salon" would appear less chilling, and Zola's chief aim, in any case, is to present the first part of a diptych, the second half of which will be the "grand salon" transformed beyond recognition. Certain elements of the salons of Renée and Juliette are echoed: "ses tentures et

ses sièges de satin jaune" [ibid]. "les fortes bûches qui brûlaient dans la cheminée" [ibid]. The effects produced, however, contradict these signs. No notation of heat is offered, but "un souffle froid avait passé" [ibid p 1147], the salon is "sépulcral, exhalant une odeur d'église" [ibid p 1154]. None of these expressions reveals a literal chill, but Zola contrives to negate the presence of the roaring fire, in all except the warmth of Sabine's personality, and her longing for love, expressed by her proximity to the fireplace, and her frequent gazing at the flames. As for the yellow furniture, Zola mentions it once only, as a 'repoussoir' to Sabine's red chair, "dont la soie rouge capitonnée avait une mollesse d'édredon", suggesting yet again the bed, since this is a chaise-longue [ibid p 1144]. Red signifies passion and danger in many of Zola's works, ⁽¹⁾ and Fauchery, the newcomer to the salon, rightly interprets the chair, "seul meuble moderne, un coin de fantaisie" [ibid pp 1144-5], as significant of a passionate nature. Just as Fauchery is a vehicle for a reading of Nana's symbolic role in society, in his newspaper article, "La Mouche d'Or", so he acts as mediator for the novelist's intention here. Fauchery reads into the "ton brutal" of this "meuble de voluptueuse paresse", "un essai, le commencement d'un désir et d'une jouissance". More precisely, and more significantly in the light of his future relations with Sabine, the chair suggests to him a woman on the point of yielding. "La grande chaise avait une mine chiffonnée, un renversement de dossier" [ibid p 1153].

Although the reception at the Muffats lasts from ten until midnight, little change occurs in the atmosphere of the gathering. Zola maintains our interest in this boring social occasion by a series of complex and subtle changes of the groupings, and by the belated arrivals of Mme Hugon and of the Marquis de Chouard. Different levels of talk are juxtaposed, and the role of Fauchery as newcomer is fully exploited to provide fresh background information as well as a speculative point of view. Only twice does a change overtake the mood of the assembly. On the first occasion,

(1) e.g. *La Fortune des Rougon*, *Germinal*, *La Bête Humaine*, and the many notations of red, crimson, orange or pink in the colours of Renée Saccard's home.

"... les lampes semblaient avoir pâli, le feu s'éteignait, une ombre sévère noyait les vieux amis de la maison dans les fauteuils qu'ils occupaient là depuis quarante ans". [ibid p 1155]

The mood is quickly dispelled, "Estelle avait sonné pour qu'on mit du bois au feu, le valet remontait les lampes, on eût dit un réveil" [ibid]. Later, at eleven o'clock, tea is served. Far from enlivening the party, this has the opposite effect, so often noted in banquets, but rare in a salon. "Les paroles se faisaient plus lentes, une lassitude endormait le salon" [ibid p 1160]. This torpor confirms the ossification of the Muffats' social circle, about to be shattered, since the red chair is a portent of future developments.

Already, early in Ch. III, the flighty Mme de Chezelles (significant name!) had proposed to Sabine a possible modernisation of the old salon,

"expliquant qu'elle changerait les tentures, les sièges, tout; puis, elle donnerait des bals à faire courir Paris" [ibid p 1145]

Sabine rejects the proffered advice, but Ch. XII sees all her friend's counsels being implemented. Zola quickly reviews the salient features of the former décor, but passes to an evocation of the renovated salon, in which costliness seems to be the criterion. Thus, the ceiling painting by Boucher, has cost 100,000 francs, and its (presumably sensual) tones replace the "plafond verdâtre" [ibid p 1419] of the old room. Velvet hangings echo the yellow velvet of former days, but the new ones are of the costly "velours de Gênes", and the profusion of lights - again eclipsing the few lamps of the old salon [ibid p 1154] - reveals "un luxe de glaces et de meubles précieux" [ibid p 1419]. Little of this is precise, since Zola intends to concentrate on the ball, to be studied later. The most significant phrase contains a poetic image of Sabine's chaise-longue:

"On eût dit que la chaise longue de Sabine, ce siège unique de soie rouge, dont la mollesse autrefois détonnait, s'était multipliée, élargie, jusqu'à emplir l'hôtel entier d'une voluptueuse paresse, d'une jouissance aiguë". [ibid pp 1419-20]

The unreality of this vision, the suggestion of hallucination, has its germ in Fauchery's speculation as to a possible "fêlure" in Sabine [ibid p 1165] and its prolongation in the comments of elderly guests; "Sabine est folle" [ibid p 1420] - an epithet already applied to Léonide de Chezelles, the instigator of the plan to refurbish the room [ibid p 1145]. It will be seen that hallucination and dislocation play a major role in the imagery of the ball.

Musical evenings dominate the Duveyrier salon in Pot-Bouille, though the choral and piano music offered imply pretensions other than the mere pursuit of pleasure. In fact, no-one but Clotilde Duveyrier, the hostess, seems to derive any delight from the strictly artistic activities. Other preoccupations, more or less clandestine, confirm this salon as a "lieu de jouissance". Trublot's initiation of Octave into the love-lives of the company recalls la Faloise and Fauchery at the Muffat's salon. The manoeuvres which compromise Auguste Vabre with Berthe Josserand, Auguste's threats against Octave at the later scene in this salon, the consecration of the liaison between Léon Josserand and Mme Dambreville are merely the most striking examples of Zola's exposure of "respectable" society's compromises with immorality in the interests of a united front. Of more immediate interest, though, is the relative paucity of descriptions of the Duveyrier salon; the 'petit salon' is merely mentioned [RM III pp 81,84] and there are the notations, by now expected, of light and heat, of background and upholstery. Indeed, the colours of red and gold, and the excessive heat, contribute to the picture of those elements of Zola's own code, a quasi-automatic response to the notion of a bourgeois salon.

"Les lustres et les appliques, les six lampes posées sur les consoles, éclairaient d'une clarté aveuglante de plein jour la pièce blanc et or, dans laquelle tranchait violemment la soie rouge du meuble et des tentures, Il faisait chaud..."

[ibid p 81]

Here, the only furniture of importance, the piano which figures so prominently in the novel, "énorme, tenait tout un panneau du salon" [ibid], making Renée's and Juliette's pianos seem mere luxury toys by comparison. The piano brings Octave into potentially compromising proximity with Clotilde, as she auditions him, but, in this comic novel, the intimacy of the scene remains unfulfilled. In this scene, later than the musical party, the salon seems prepared for a lovers' tête-à-tête;

"une lampe posée sur un guéridon, à côté de l'instrument, éclairait mal la pièce, dont une moitié restait obscure"

[ibid p 182]

"Pas un bruit ne venait des pièces voisines, l'ombre vague du grand salon semblait les envelopper d'une volupté assoupie".

[ibid p 184]

Zola concludes his study of this bourgeois salon with artistic pretensions, with a repetition of the first scene, even the musical pièce de résistance being the same: the "Bénédiction des Poignards" from Meyerbeer's Les Huguenots. Apart from two deaths⁽¹⁾ and three marriages⁽²⁾, the cast list remains virtually unchanged, which enables Zola to attribute to Octave "une singulière sensation de recommencement" [ibid p 381], which is echoed in succeeding paragraphs:

"aujourd'hui répétait hier, il n'y avait ni arrêt ni dénouement" . [ibid]

"Puis, ce fut le chœur qui recommença." [ibid p 382]

"Le thé, ensuite, déroula le même défilé, promena les mêmes tasses et les mêmes sandwiches" [ibid]

"Enfin, comme tous les samedis, quand minuit sonna, les invités s'en allèrent peu à peu". [ibid]

Nowhere else does Zola indicate so clearly the ritualistic element of salon life, its ordered, unsurprising routine. Even in Nana, the boredom conveyed by his depiction of the Muffat salon is not inextricably linked to repetition, since we see the gathering through the eyes of an outsider.

(1) M. Vabre, M. Josserand.

(2) Berthe Josserand and Auguste Vabre, Léon Josserand and Mme Dambreville's niece, Octave Mouret and Mme Hédouin.

It may seem paradoxical to insist equally upon the sensual potential of the salon, but Zola seems to find the two aspects of the room and its function quite compatible, particularly in La Curée, Pot-Bouille and, most notably, Au Bonheur des Dames.

Zola sets two important chapters of Au Bonheur des Dames in Henriette Desforges's salon, thus continuing a pattern set by Une Page d'Amour and Pot-Bouille. A new element appears in the descriptions, as Zola introduces deliberately "impressionistic" touches to his tableaux. Salons do not form a significant part of the Impressionist painters' subjects; however, Zola evidently seeks to convey not one, but a series of images which link Henriette's salon to set-pieces in other novels which directly recall the works of painters, notably the racecourse scene in Nana (Degas) and the shunting yards and station in La Bête Humaine (Monet). The novelist is able to draw upon notations other than the purely visual, and, like the painters he so admired, Zola seeks to present an image selected from a sequence of possible moments. The gathering at Henriette's apartment in Ch. III covers several hours and brings together a range of characters. Zola selects a few points at which to describe the changes, subtle or marked, in the room and its atmosphere.

As often, the novelist first presents an outline sketch, largely factual, but already indicating the bias towards which his fuller evocations will tend.

"Le salon, avec son meuble Louis XVI de brocatelle à bouquets, ses bronzes dorés, ses grandes plantes vertes, avait une intimité tendre de femme, malgré la hauteur du plafond; et par les deux fenêtres on apercevait les marronniers des Tuileries."

[RM III p 445]

Zola seems to impose "une intimité tendre de femme" in arbitrary fashion on a large room, in which doubtless the flowered upholstery and the house-plants are intended to create the desired atmosphere in contradiction to

("malgré") the dimensions of the salon. The windows provide a new focus, the effect of the park outside, and of the changing light, on the interior of the salon itself.

The "petit salon", however, receives scant attention, "un boudoir très coquet tendu de soie bouton d'or", reminiscent of Renée Saccard's intimate room [ibid p 448]. Mention has already been made of the interplay between the two salons in this chapter of Zola's novel. One of the effects which he draws from the separation of two groups is the impressionistic blur of the ladies' voices, heard by the men in the smaller room;

"ces dames prenaient par moments des voix aiguës, que le léger tintement des cuillers dans les tasses de Chine accompagnait; et l'on entendait de temps à autre, au milieu d'un court silence, le bruit d'une soucoupe trop vivement reposée sur le marbre du guéridon". [ibid p 454]

Reminiscent of the notation of sounds at the Saccards' dinner party in La Curée, this evocation also recalls the picnic at Longchamp in Nana, an episode also rich in notations of sky and light. Here in an interior setting, Zola makes great play with the effects of changing light on the tonalities of Henriette's salon.

"Un brusque rayon du soleil couchant, qui venait de paraître au bord d'un grand nuage, dorait les cimes des marronniers du jardin, entraînait par les fenêtres en une poussière d'or rouge, dont l'incendie allumait la brocatelle et les cuivres des meubles". [ibid]

In addition, this sudden lightening of the sky may be seen to correspond to Octave's "joie de l'action, la gaîté de l'existence" [ibid p 451], set against the "grand nuage" of Paul de Vallagnosc's world-weary pose.

As this scene gives way to Octave's business discussion with Hartmann, the adjoining salon subtly changes its tones.

"Le soleil pâlisait, la poussière d'or rouge, n'était plus qu'une lueur blonde, dont l'adieu se mourait dans la soie des tentures et les panneaux des meubles" [ibid p 458]

Similarly, the women's chatter has been transmuted:

"un étroit cercle de jupes, d'où montaient des rires, des paroles chuchotées, des questions et des réponses ardentes".

[ibid]

This passionate discussion of clothes serves to illustrate Octave's contention that his commercial dreams can succeed, but it is more difficult to see in the description of the changing light any other purpose than the establishment of the passage of time, and the desire to exploit a descriptive vein. Zola's justification is the climate of intimacy which draws the women together as the light fades, but no essential link is established. More convincing is the third stage of the salon's evolution, as Octave is called upon to rejoin the ladies and to vaunt his new silks. This "heure attendrie du crépuscule, cette minute de discrète volupté, dans les appartements parisiens" [ibid p 462] can be seen as the logical sequel to the orgiastic "saccage d'étoffes, la mise au pillage des magasins, un appétit de luxe qui se répandait en toilettes jalousees et rêvées", which has immediately preceded [ibid p 460]. As for the appearance of the salon, once more the sky outside provides the clue.

"Le soleil venait de se coucher derrière les arbres du jardin, le jour tombait, une ombre fine noyait peu à peu la vaste pièce".

[ibid]

Details are added in a painterly fashion. "M. de Boves et Vallagnosc, toujours debout devant une fenêtre, jetaient sur le tapis une nappe d'ombre", whilst in the "dernier coup de lumière...M. Marty... mettait son profil pauvre" [ibid]. The immobility of these men, and such words as "ombre fine", "jetaient", "nappe" and "mettait" suggest a piece of art criticism, the analysis of the structure and tones of a painting.

Zola's final tableau of Henriette's salon in Chapter III emphasises the eroticism which has underlain so much of the afternoon's proceedings, from the first encounter between Henriette and Octave, to the novelist's keen

observation of Mme Marty's gradual revelation of her purchases as a kind of striptease. ("Elle rougissait de plaisir, une pudeur de femme qui se déshabille la rendait charmante et embarrassée, à chaque article nouveau qu'elle sortait" [ibid p 466]). As night falls, Octave has to lean over the ladies to point out details of the materials they are passing round, so that his beard touches their hair. Zola perceptively sees his identification with the women who are his future victims ("Il était femme ..." [ibid p 468]), which enables him to remain immune to their "odeur échauffée,", to their "voix chuchotantes et pâmées". The room itself suggests a church with "autour du jeune homme de vagues agenouillements de dévotes" [ibid]. At the same time, the key word "alcôve" evokes the bedroom.

"Une dernière clarté luisait au flanc de la théière, une lueur courte et vive de veilleuse, qui aurait brûlé dans une alcôve attiédie par le parfum du thé". [ibid]

This image completes the feeling of languor and melancholy, "cette volupté molle du crépuscule" [ibid], which the first sentence of Zola's description establishes, beginning, as always, with the sky outside: "Les blancheurs mourantes du ciel s'éteignaient dans les cuivres des meubles" [ibid]. The entry of a servant with the lamps breaks the spell⁽¹⁾, and "Le salon s'éveilla, clair et gai" - life resumes its forward movement, the characters resume their normal activities of eating and talking.

Zola returns to Henriette's salon in Chapter XI, the dramatic core of which takes place in the neighbouring bedroom, as Henriette seeks to abase Denise before Octave. This crisis is framed by episodes in the salon. Both chapters open with a conversation between Henriette and her protégé of the moment, underlining her role as 'broker', as her encouragement of Paul de Vallagnosc's engagement to Berthe de Boves, and the acceptance of Mme Guibal's intrigue with M. de Boves imply other, sexual transactions for which the salon provides a respectable cloak.⁽¹⁾

(1) Compare the last sentence of Gide's *La Porte Etroite*.

(2) Earlier in the novel, the 'salon' of the big store has been seen to be a meeting-place for clandestine lovers, Mme de Guibal and M. de Boves among them [ibid p 625].

Henriette's salon, as noted earlier, is the last to be treated as an important décor by Zola - certainly the last recurring one. Only those of Hennebeau in Germinal and Sandoz in L'Oeuvre receive more than cursory attention in the later novels. Both mark a departure from the light, airy room of a largely female society, already examined. Zola creates, in his last two salons, rooms strongly reminiscent of his own room at Médan, glimpsed in the background of his portrait by Manet. In both cases, the room is crammed with the acquisitions of a cultured bourgeois, but the intention behind each description is different. Hennebeau's salon, seen by the visiting miners' delegation, surprises and intimidates. Furnished in "une de ces confusions de tous les styles, que le goût de l'antiquaille a mises à la mode", it offers not only an accumulation but a misuse of old objects. Besides genuine French antiques ("des fauteuils Henri II, des chaises Louis XV") Hennebeau has plundered other traditions ("un cabinet italien du dix-septième siècle, un contador espagnol du quinzième") [Germinal RM III p 1318], and oriental carpets. Ecclesiastical furnishings here lose their function:

"un devant d'autel pour le lambrequin de la cheminée, et des chamarres d'anciennes chasubles réappliquées sur les portières".

[ibid p 1319]

Zola offers no direct criticism of this exploitation, merely noting the miners' reaction: "Ces vieux ors, ces vieilles soies aux tons fauves, tout ce luxe de chapelle, les avait saisis d'un malaise respectueux", [ibid], although "ce qui les suffoquait surtout" [ibid] in both senses of the verb, is the experience of central heating, "une chaleur égale de calorifère", which can be seen as part of the complex imagery of opposites in Germinal, heat and cold forming an element of this. We note the familiar yellow of so many salons in the Rougon-Macquart series ("tons fauves") and the repetition in "ces vieux ors, ces vieilles soies" stresses in an incantatory way the respect to be accorded to an established order. The presence of the accoutrements of religious rites, albeit in a debased

function, not only recalls the religious aura surrounding Octave Mouret as 'high priest' of a new cult in the salon of Au Bonheur des Dames, but emphasises one aspect of the social oppression of the miners, intimidated when faced by the double evidence of wealth and of the power of the church.

The similar accumulation of old furniture by Sandoz and his wife Henriette in L'Oeuvre evokes ambiguous comments from Zola reminding us that Sandoz represents a projection of the author himself.

"Le salon [...] s'encombrait de vieux meubles, de vieilles tapisseries, de bibelots de tous les peuples et de tous les siècles, un flot montant, débordant à cette heure".

[RM IV p 323]

Despite the gaiety and approval implied by later sentences describing the couple's "rage joyeuse d'acheter", Zola seems to be sounding a warning in evoking "un flot montant, débordant", and the rape of other ages and cultures to content "d'anciens désirs de jeunesse, des ambitions romantiques" [ibid] follows hard on the heels of a list of the dishes to be served to the evening's guests, a menu difficult to accept uncritically in its (to us) pretentiously recherché plundering of "curiosités gastronomiques, venues des quatre coins du monde" [ibid].

Sandoz, we are told "n'avait rien du collectionneur, il était tout pour le décor, pour les grands effets d'ensemble" [ibid]. Application of this analysis of Sandoz/Zola to Zola's own work lies outside the scope of the present study. However, the description to which it forms a prelude reveals a strong affinity with Hennebeau's salon:

"et le salon, à la vérité, éclairé par deux lampes de vieux Delft, prenait des tons fanés très doux et très chauds, les ors éteints des dalmatiques réappliqués sur les sièges, les incrustations jaunies des cabinets italiens et des vitrines hollandaises, les teintes fondues des portières orientales, les cent petites notes des ivoires, des faïences, des émaux, pâlis par l'âge et se détachant contre la tenture neutre de la pièce, d'un rouge sombre".

[ibid pp 323-4]

Not only the length of this list intimidates the modern reader, but also Zola's insistence on the plurality of all these acquisitions. Once more, the ensemble is treated as a painting, with effects of light, touches of contrast, with yellow, ivory and red as the only colours mentioned. We note, too, the repetitions found in Zola's description of Hennebeau's salon: "de vieux meubles, de vieilles tapisseries, des bibelots de tous les peuples et de tous les siècles", already quoted. The affinities between the two rooms are finally more important than the difference in tone. The salon, even that of his most sympathetic characters, remains an uneasy place for Zola, and it is tempting to see in the virtual eclipse of the salon in the last novels of the series, a deliberate attempt to 'exorcise' it, in Borie's terms.

The Sandoz salon, in fact, is not seen again, and only Maxime Saccard in L'Argent, amongst later characters possesses a salon used as such. But his visitor, Mme Caroline, is rapidly (and implausibly) shown into his bedroom, the salon leaving only a generalised impression of "joli, tendre et discret" behind it [RM V p 153]. The last mention of a salon in the series continues and completes the process of exorcism already seen in Hamelin's use of his salon as a drawing-office in L'Argent. Pascal Rougon, in Le Docteur Pascal, possesses only a "salon abandonné où l'on mettait la provision de pommes de terre" at La Souléiade [RM I p 939].

Earlier, Zola evokes Félicité's two salons shown in previous novels [ibid p 925]. Thus, the end of the series recalls its beginnings, and it now seems useful to return to Félicité's salon, and consider it in the light of the foregoing analysis.

Many and various though the settings of the first Rougon-Macquart novel are, its focal point is Félicité's "salon jaune" depicted several times as the family's fortunes turn. More important here than with any other salon is its physical location, affording a view of the coveted residence

of the tax-gatherer on the Place de la Sous-Préfecture in Plassans, a house to which the Rougons eventually progress. The envy of the couple, expressed by the greenish-yellow of their salon, finds its focus on this view across the square. Furnishings dating from Napoleon's times, engravings depicting Napoleon's battles, point to the coming resurgence of a form of Bonapartism, as well as contrasting ironically Pierre Rougon's part in the 'battle' for Plassans with the true glories of a previous age. Upholstery is "de velours jaunâtre, à fleurs satinées". This indeterminate yellow bears little resemblance to the "bouton d'or" settings of the bourgeois ladies of the coming régime. Equally, the solid, predominantly wooden or marble furniture can, in retrospect, be seen to contrast with what was to be the future style - furnishings often over-stuffed or padded, designed for comfort rather than durability. The walls of Félicité's salon, covered with "un papier orange à grands ramages" [RM I p 70], clash with the yellow velvet, whereas the distinguished Parisian salons of the Second Empire favour gold and white, or red, as the setting for the new elegance. Zola carefully notes the "jour faux et aveuglant" [ibid] which the two yellowish colours produce, affecting all the wooden and marble furnishings. Underfoot, the carpet "ne couvrait que le milieu du parquet" [ibid], the implication of insufficient means being clear, as with the single, central, fly-specked chandelier. Yet, once the curtains are drawn, "les teintes devenaient cependant assez harmonieuses, le salon paraissait presque propre" [ibid]. Zola seems to imply that the view outwards creates the disharmony within, and that exclusion of that view may restore a partial harmony.

Whereas other salons serve as the focal point for the circle of the hostess's female friends, here no women other than Félicité are mentioned. Moreover, Félicité emerges as the dominating spirit of the salon, accepted and deferred to as an equal and more by the habitués. Whilst the ladies of

Parisian society cluster around one or two token men, here the sex roles are reversed, and, on the morrow of their first victory, Félicité, not Pierre "fit lentement le tour du salon" [ibid p 241], seeing in its shabby décor "un aspect de débris glorieux traînant sur un champ de bataille:" [ibid p 242]. Zola's ironic comparison with Austerlitz recalls the scenes of Napoleon's triumphs depicted on the walls of the room. This reference allows for a rapid conversion to Waterloo - presumably not one of the battles so depicted - as the situation deteriorates. The salon too assumes another aspect.

"Le jour tombait, un jour sale d'hiver qui donnait des teintes boueuses au papier orange à grands ramages; jamais la pièce n'avait paru plus fanée, plus sordide, plus honteuse".
ibid p 255]

The salon has merged as barometer of the family's fortunes, or, rather, as an indicator of the old couple's state of mind. The light penetrating from outside produces the depressing effect quoted above; once again, the situation of the salon is capital, as Félicité demonstrates by going to the window "où elle avait humé avec délice l'encens de toute une sous-préfecture" [ibid].

The triumph of the Rougons is accompanied by the transformation of the their salon into a banqueting room, discussed in an earlier chapter. Only once does Zola mention the former appearance of Félicité's salon. Extra lights have been hired, and the chandelier cover removed, so that the guests, "sous la clarté vive", saw it "pour la première fois sans son étui piqué de chiures noires" [ibid p 305]. This sudden lavishness with lights contrasts with the single candle seen in the coveted house opposite, where the tax-gatherer lies dead. This further reversal signals the end of the Rougons' first volume, and their translation to a higher sphere in preparation for La Conquête de Plassans.

Félicité's new salon, in fact, makes a brief appearance in that fourth novel of the series. Indeed, she has both a 'grand' and a 'petit salon', again, a barometer of her rise in status. Faujas inspects both briefly, just before overhearing a conversation which reveals to him the Rougons' origins. Thus, Zola juxtaposes the memory of their "salon jaune" and their present, more dignified status. The 'petit salon' seems to be included mainly to compare its massive bookcases with "le cabinet d'un magistrat" [La Conquête de Plassans RM I p 950]. The 'grand salon' continues this theme, but with ironic or satirical additions, "tenant à la fois de la gravité administrative d'un ministère et du luxe tapageur d'un grand restaurant" [ibid]. The colour scheme is green, "très sérieux [...] mais plus chargé de dorures" than the 'petit salon' and having, at the opposite end to that room, Félicité's boudoir, straw-coloured, "avec un meuble brodé de ramages violets" [ibid p 951]. This colour is an attenuated version of the "salon jaune" and the "ramages" recall the orange wallpaper there, but the chief echo is of the hôtel Saccard. The symmetrical positioning of the two small rooms corresponds to Aristide's "fumoir" and Renée's "petit salon bouton d'or", the colour of the latter being similar to the "paille" of Félicité's boudoir, and, like it, "encombré de fauteuils, de poufs, de canapés" [ibid]. Even the green of the salon recalls the green dining-room at the hôtel Saccard, where the furniture is of pear-wood like Pierre Rougon's bookcases.

Although this consideration of Félicité Rougon's two salons concludes the analysis of the salon in its ostensible role, it has already been demonstrated that the salon is capable of many transformations, or, alternatively, does not retain Zola's attention. As early as the third novel of his series, Le Ventre de Paris, Zola minimises the role of the Quenus' salon,

"dont le meuble, caché sous des housses blanches, dormait discrètement dans le demi-jour des persiennes toujours tirées pour que la clarté trop vive ne mangeât pas le bleu tendre du reps".

[RM I p 655]

No doubt, this care for material goods accords with Zola's concept of the Quenu couple, and the plot presents nothing of their social life which might necessitate opening the salon, but the negation of function establishes a pattern for some future novels, in sharp contrast to those in which the salon plays an important role. The use of dining-rooms as salons in La Conquête de Plassans and La Joie de Vivre has already been noted, and, in the latter novel, the salon has become a downstairs bedroom. In Son Excellence Eugène Rougon neither the Empress's "salon de famille", mentioned on p 166, nor Rougon's own salon as minister (pp 203 and 205) merits a description. Hélène Grandjean's flat in Une Page d'Amour has no salon, as Zola's sketch plan shows⁽¹⁾. He pays scant attention to Nana's salons, but, exceptionally in a novel with surprisingly few descriptive passages, Pot-Bouille contains a number of references besides the set-pieces in the Duveyrier salon. Two lines cover the salon of Mme Campardon ("blanc et or") and her "petit salon", "transformé en cabinet de travail" [RM III p 8]. Later, this same room becomes Gasparine's bedroom [ibid p 168]. Zola also offers an evocation of the "vieux meuble râpé de velours jaune", queasily lit by pink-shaded lamps and backed by "la nudité froide des panneaux blanc et or" of the Jossierands' salon [ibid p 46]. Of all the salons, this most nearly approaches the Rougons' salon of La Fortune des Rougon, being equally tainted by envy and pretentiousness.

Further echoes of earlier novels are found as Zola briefly shows the salon of Duveyrier's mistress Clarisse. The description remains minimal ("son tapis à grandes fleurs, son meuble et ses tentures de satin grenat" [ibid p 133]) but Octave's comparison of it to Duveyrier's own salon, and the presence of several friends who frequent both the 'official' and the 'clandestine' ménages, recalls Zola's handling of the salons of Renée Saccard and Blanche Muller in La Curée, and those of Sabine Muffat and Nana. No doubt, the insistence on salons as settings in Pot-Bouille compensates to some degree for the lack of description of bedroom and dining-rooms in which some important scenes take place. Nonetheless, Pot-Bouille remains exceptional, along with La Conquête de Plassans,

(1) Bibliothèque Nationale, Nouvelles Acquisitions Françaises 10,318, fo 517

L'Argent and La Débâcle, in that Zola rarely provides extended descriptions of rooms.

Like Campardon in Pot-Bouille, Sandoz in L'Oeuvre has turned the salon into a work room, [RM IV p 189] of which no description is given. Hamelin's study in L'Argent, formerly the salon, has been sacrificed by his sister ("leur seule grande pièce qu'ils avaient transformée" [RM V p 60]) and retains nothing of a feminine character. Finally, it is recorded that, before becoming a potato store, Dr. Pascal's salon had been his surgery:

"Autrefois, lorsque le docteur recevait ses clients chez lui, il donnait des consultations là; mais, depuis des années, on avait monté, dans sa chambre, le bureau et le fauteuil".

[Le Docteur Pascal RM V pp 939-40]

This flexibility, or lack of character, of the salon indicates some ambivalence in Zola's attitude. His most detailed descriptions cover only the salons of the "grande bourgeoisie", and can be identified with those elements in society which, more than any other, led the rush for gratification which, in Zola's view, played a large part in the downfall of France. The promotion of Félicité Rougon to the status of a two-salon hostess clearly indicates the trend of Zola's view of the salon as symbol of the bourgeoisie. At the same time, the elegance and charm of many salons evidently beguile him, whilst the depiction of something like his own domestic interior in that of Sandoz in L'Oeuvre seems to identify Zola himself with the very tendencies he set out to condemn. Nor can it be said that all those whose salons are omitted, transformed or merely mentioned in passing are exempted from Zola's strictures. This may be so of the Huberts or the Hamelins, or of Pascal Rougon, but not of Lisa Quenu, or of the characters in Pot-Bouille. It would seem rather that Zola finds in the opulent, overheated and comfortable salons of the "grandes bourgeois", a form of enervation not far removed from the eroticism of the bedroom or the torpor of the dinner table. The overt sensuality of Renée's 'petit salon', the carefully orchestrated descriptions of Henriette Desforges's

circle are redolent of the "jouissance" which it is Zola's purpose to identify and to denounce, whilst not himself remaining immune to its blandishments. Here the juxtaposition of the Hennebeau and Sandoz salons, so similar in details, in consecutive novels of the series, is perhaps significant. The Sandoz's salon may be seen as a milestone on the road to the 'exorcism' of the salon, since here husband and wife reign as equals, seeking out their acquisitions together. The "rage joyeuse d'acheter" is exculpated by the adjective and the resemblance of their salon to the Hennebeaus' is excused by their financial independence; no downtrodden miners can eye the Sandoz's antiques with disquiet and resentment.

But the salon has another, major role to play in the Rougon-Macquart novels. Its transformation frequently lends it the status of theatre or dance-floor, and, in the case of Renée Saccard's 'grand salon', both in the same evening. The dance in particular seems to represent for Zola the rush towards gratification, but the theatrical entertainments too have their less reputable side⁽¹⁾. The "Bénédiction des Poignards" from Meyerbeer's Les Huguenots may seem respectably cultural and uplifting, but Zola's use of it as a parallel to Mme Josserand's scheme to promote Berthe's marriage by compromising her daughter in public must surely be ironic. The hidden "Valentine" of the opera's plot corresponds to Berthe hidden with Auguste behind the curtain, and in the "ordre de la reine" of the libretto, Clotilde Duveyrier's dragooning of the guests. The "sainte cause" of the men's chorus amusingly becomes the ensnaring of the booby Auguste.

The "tableaux vivants" at the hôtel Saccard in La Curée also establish parallels. The casting of Renée and Maxime as Echo and Narcissus scarcely requires comment, but the "note de l'or et de la chair" of Zola's outline

(1) It is perhaps sufficient to recall the first chapter of Nana to see Zola's identification of certain types of theatre with the cult of "la jouissance".

plan for his novel is struck by the tableaux of the realms of Venus and Plutus, both of which affect the spectators directly.

"Un grand souffle d'amour, de désir contenu, était venu des nudités de l'estrade, courait le salon [...] c'était un chuchotement d'alcôve, un demi-silence de bonne compagnie, un souhait de volupté à peine formulé par un frémissement de lèvres; et, dans les regards muets [...] il y avait la hardiesse brutale d'amours offertes et acceptées d'un coup d'oeil".

[RM I p 545]

"Les mots "Que de pièces! que d'argent!" couraient, avec des sourires, de longs frémissements d'aise".

[ibid p 549]

The room itself undergoes a transformation into a "théâtre improvisé, une estrade que cachaient deux larges rideaux de velours rouge à franges d'or, glissant sur des tringles" [ibid p 538]. Improvisation implies haste ("les tapissiers avaient donné à dix heures les derniers coups de marteau"), and the commandeering of adjoining rooms ("le fumoir, converti en foyer pour les artistes" [ibid]), and even of the room above, "où une armée de femmes de chambre préparaient [sic] les toilettes des différents tableaux" [ibid p 539].

The guests at this festivity have equally been transformed, since the "tableaux vivants" form the prelude to a "bal travesti".

"Les rangées de fauteuils offraient la plus étonnante cohue de marquises, de châtelaines, de laitières, d'espagnoles, de bergères, de sultanes",

[ibid]

all set against the unchanged appearance of the men, whose evening dress forms a "masse compacte" "une grande tache sombre" in contrast to the "moire d'étoffes claires et d'épaules nues, toutes braisillantes des étincelles vives des bijoux" [ibid]. These contrasts have already been noted in Zola's descriptions of dinner tables, but here the two sexes are separated. The list of fancy-dress costumes shows less invention (on the part of the guests, perhaps?) than might have been expected from the introductory phrase "la plus étonnante cohue", and falls into three sets of pairs; the aristocracy of the past (châtelaine, marquise),

romantic populism (bergère, laitière) and the exotic (espagnole, sultane). Individual guests sport costumes appropriate to their character, Sidonie as a witch, Louise as a page-boy, Mme Michelin as a harem beauty.

The salon is transformed again as the ball commences. "Les domestiques avaient rangé le long des murs les fauteuils des dames" [ibid p 554], so that the room now seems bare and "allongeait maintenant, du petit salon jaune à l'estrade, son tapis nu" [ibid p 554], seemingly a garden, "dont les grandes fleurs de pourpre s'ouvraient, sous l'égouttement de lumière tombant du cristal des lustres" [ibid]. As so often in La Curée, notably in the outdoor scenes, art and nature interact, the "rain" of light falls on the obviously unreal flowers. As usual, too, Zola notes the heat of the room. Even before the performance, "il faisait déjà chaud" [ibid p 539]. Now, "La chaleur croissait, les tentures rouges brunissaient de leurs reflets l'or des meubles et du plafond" [ibid p 554]. Zola thus prepares the reader for his vision of the ball as Hell.

La Curée yet again proves to be vital to the formulation of Zola's themes and images, for many of the elements present in the descriptions analysed above recur at both private and public dances, in luxurious or gimcrack settings, throughout the series of novels. As with bedrooms and dining-rooms, it is proposed to include in this survey ballroom scenes located outside private houses, in order to illuminate consideration of the private dances. Equally, it seems valid to separate the descriptions of the rooms themselves from Zola's evocation of the dancing, since this will facilitate the juxtaposition of revelatory passages from different novels.

Thus, the Saccards' room establishes the improvised nature of the ballroom in the private house, an aspect of the transformation even more prominent in Zola's presentation of the renovated Muffat salon in Nana, already analysed, and "où les peintures séchaient à peine". [RM II p 1419]

"Le matin encore, les tapissiers clouaient des tentures; et, au moment d'allumer les lustres, vers neuf heures, l'architecte [...] donnait les derniers ordres".

[ibid]

Juliette Deberle's salon, like Renée's, becomes a theatre before serving as a ballroom. The first element in its transformation lies in the closed curtains, shutting out the "ciel louche" of winter [Une Page d'Amour, RM II p 889], so that the many candles seem "une chapelle ardente". Malignon, one of the guests, comments several times on this, adding, "on croirait entrer chez des morts" [ibid p 895] or, "Positivement [...] on est dans un caveau" [ibid p 898]. At each of his frequent departures from the room,

"le plein jour de la rue entraît alors en un coup de lumière blafard, et qui attristait le resplendissement des lampes et des bougies".

[ibid p 900]

After hearing Dr. Deberle's declaration of love, Héléne escapes to "un office, où entraît le grand jour. Cette clarté soudaine l'aveugla. Elle eut peur" [ibid p 902]. Thus, Zola's intention gradually becomes plain, as the quality of the party is seen to depend on artificial light, the creation of an ambience which contradicts reality. Subtly, a judgement is being passed on Henri Deberle's declaration of love, dependant for its expression on a theatrically-created, but false environment with undertones of death. Zola otherwise devotes little attention to the room itself. He notes that the throng of children and parents breaks up into small groups, and insists upon the confusion of impressions, without seeking to impose any pattern.

"Il y avait là près d'une centaine d'enfants, pêle-mêle, dans la gaieté bariolée des costumes clairs, où le bleu et le rose éclataient".

[ibid p 893]

Unity of a sort is suggested by the predominantly fair hair of the children, "toutes les nuances du blond ... une moisson de chevelures blondes" [ibid]. Zola distinguishes the behaviour of boys from that of girls, but the long paragraph describing the crowd successfully suggests confusion.

Such transformation of the basic function of a room would not, of course, be necessary in the case of the public dance hall. Thus, Zola barely indicates the setting of such halls as the "grand salon de la Folie" in L'Assommoir, "Mabille" in Nana or the village hall in La Terre. The Préfecture at Niort undergoes some changes for the official ball in Son Excellence Eugène Rougon, principally additional lighting which creates the "flamboisement" central to Zola's concept of this event. At the Hôtel du Louvre, scene of the wedding reception in Pot-Bouille, the changes resemble those at the Saccards' home:

"Trois lustres éclairaient le grand salon rouge, dans lequel on avait simplement laissé des sièges le long des murs, en ménageant, à l'un des bouts, devant la cheminée, la place du petit orchestre".

[RM III p 151]

"Simplement" indicates that, in Zola's view, these changes are unremarkable, and that more extensive modifications might have been expected.

The single exception to this unwillingness on Zola's part to dwell upon the features of public dance halls occurs in Germinal, where the "Bon-Joyeux" retains his interest, no doubt because it serves a double purpose in the novel. Most unusually, the transformation comes after the ball, for this purpose-built dance hall must serve as a clandestine venue for Pluchart's address to the strikers. Its function as a dance hall is revealed by its floor; "vaste pièce planchée au milieu seulement, dallée de briques autour" [RM III p 1268]. Zola notes, as so often, symmetrical features of the room; the paper chains which "se croisaient, d'un angle à l'autre du plafond, et que réunissait, au centre, une couronne"; the "écussons dorés" which "s'alignaient" around the walls; the lamps placed at each corner. The musicians, on their platform "grande comme une chaire à prêcher" [ibid] can barely stand upright, so low is the ceiling, which gives pause as to the objectivity of the "vaste pièce" quoted above. Most interesting of these details is the comparison of the rostrum to a preacher's pulpit, in the light of the dedication of the "écussons" to the

patron saints of various trades. These religious overtones remain puzzling until the second glimpse of the hall, its décor briefly recapitulated, but with this difference:

"Seulement, on avait remplacé la tribune des musiciens par une table et trois chaises, dans un angle, et, rangés de biais, des bancs garnissaient la salle".

[ibid p 1337]

The substitution of the apparatus of secular politics for a hint of religious domination is reinforced by Zola's addition to previous information; the "écussons dorés" are revealed as "des écussons de carton doré" [ibid]. The saints' power to protect the trades of which they are patrons, is, it is suggested, a sham. But the curious alignment of the new furniture, the table "dans un angle", the benches "rangés de biais" equally hint at something morally askew in the new dispensation, a hint which Pluchart's visit will confirm. Zola similarly implies that the house 'La Croix de Maufras' in La Bête Humaine is sinister since it is "posée de biais" on the track of the railway whereas, logically, the line was laid at an angle to the house.

Beyond the descriptions of the rooms lies the evocation of the dance itself, whether in the salon or the public room, whether it be the elegant waltzing after the banquet in Son Excellence Eugène Rougon or the sweaty, licentious grappling at the "Bon-Joyeux" in Germinal. Whatever the circumstances or nature of the dance, Zola interprets it, no doubt justifiably, as a form of pleasure-seeking, erotic in nature.

However, for Zola, the connotations of the dance include more sinister elements. Behind the formal set-pieces in which he evokes the balls themselves lie allusions which extend the meaning of "danser", and of which L'Assommoir offers a significant range. Popular speech includes such phrases, used by Zola, as "la danse devant le buffet" to express the pangs of unassuaged hunger, and adds violence to the idea of dancing as capering. Thus, Lalie Bijard, beneath her father's whip, performed

"Une vraie danse de bête à qui on apprend des tours. Ce pauvre chat valsait, fallait voir!"

[RM II p 693]

More pointedly, Coupeau's 'delirium tremens' evokes the dance as he "dansait et gueulait" [ibid p 782]. Gervaise's first reaction to the "rigodon de soulards" executed by her husband is "Crénom! Quel cavalier seul!" [ibid], and her interior monologue concludes with: "Et, en avant l'orchestre, balancez vos dames!" Later, the use of "valser" to denote Coupeau's movements [ibid p 785] and Boche's anecdote of the workman "mort en dansant la polka" [ibid p 784] further strengthen the equation of dance with madness. Like many of the actual ball scenes, Coupeau's "dance" is described at various stages of its progression, until the body falls exhausted,

"comme qui dirait le galop de la fin, quand le jour paraît et que tous les danseurs se tiennent par la patte en tapant du talon".

[ibid p 793]

and only death can stop the dance - indeed, only when the spasmodic twitching of Coupeau's feet ceases can he be pronounced dead.

As examination of the scenes depicting dancing will show, Zola sees the dance as one manifestation of madness, bearing the same relationship to the dis-integrating nervous system. The most extreme case proposed by Zola is the riot at the Bal Mabille, glimpsed after the triumph of the racehorse Nana, an unexpected victory for French pride.

"Cette classique soirée de folie réunissait toute la jeunesse galante, un beau monde se ruant dans une brutalité et une imbécillité de laquais. On s'écrasait sous les guirlandes de gaz; des habits noirs, des toilettes excessives, des femmes venues décolletées, avec de vieilles robes bonnes à salir, tournaient, hurlaient, fouettés par une saoulerie énorme. A trente pas, on n'entendait plus les cuivres de l'orchestre. Personne ne dansait".

[Nana RM II p 1407]

"...et, comme l'orchestre faisait obstacle, on le prit d'assaut, on cassa les chaises et les pupitres. Une police paternelle organisait le désordre".

[ibid p 1408]

Anticipating as it does the mob in the closing pages of Nana, howling for military glory, this picture of a dance degenerating into mindless violence and stupidity, destroying even the orchestra which provides the pretext for the assembly, retains (despite the notation "Personne ne dansait") links with other ballrooms scenes in the Rougon-Macquart series. It may be thought to represent Zola's final word - in degree if not in time - on the Empire's rush for pleasure, a self-inflicted blow, connived at by the forces of authority - the "police paternelle" of the last sentence.

Most closely linked to the Mabille scene is the Muffats' ball in the same novel, but the first ball of the series, the Saccards' "bal travesti" in that seminal work La Curée deserves pride of place. The "travesti" element adds a dimension of unreality to the dancers. The two factors common to any ball are music and movement, both implying time. Zola, indeed, most frequently presents dances as extending over an evening, like a banquet, but he confers upon his ballroom scenes a dramatic importance rarely found in his dinner table sequences. A ball is usually the scene of, or is intercut with, an important development in the plot. Perhaps the Muffat ball forms an exception here, being chiefly representative of the extent of the family's fall from probity, but we may note the following crises occurring at or during balls: Renée's final appeal to Maxime, her betrayal by him and her self-appraisal which follows; Dr. Deberle's declaration to Hélène; the arrest and death of Martineau in Son Excellence Eugène Rougon; and the violent family quarrels accompanying the Josserand/Vabre wedding ball in Pot-Bouille. The popular dance-halls in L'Assommoir, Germinal and La Terre equally appear in the context of plot, though not of violent crisis; the Coupeaus' hunt for Nana, Etienne's decision to lodge with the Maheus, and the wedding of Buteau and Lise.

The Saccards' ball also establishes the close relationship between dancing and eating, two appetites gratified together. Buffets accompany all society balls, as well as the weddings in La Terre and Pot-Bouille, and the "Bon-Joyeux" in Germinal is a drinking-place as well as a dance-hall. It should be noted in passing that Gervaise's wedding feast in L'Assommoir is accompanied by a dance in the garden outside: "Des fenê[^]tres, on voyait les couples tourner, entre les feuilles" [RM II p 460]; and the befuddled ending of the name-day feast in the same novel leaves the question open: "Peut-ê[^]tre bien, tout de mêm[^]e, qu'on avait dansé autour de la table; en se tenant par les mains". [ibid p 594].

Zola only seldom identifies the music played for these dances, but does so to particular effect in La Curée and Nana. Renée's guests dance to the tunes of the working classes:

"ce fut d'abord un quadrille: 'Ah! il a des bottes, il a des bottes, Bastien!' qui faisait alors les délices des bastringues"
[RM I p 557]

or "Ohé! les p'tits agneaux" and "J'ai un pied qui r'mue", mentioned in the same paragraph, or "la polka des 'Baisers', célèbre dans les bals publics" [ibid pp 558-9].⁽¹⁾ The conscious "slumming" of this repertoire echoes Renée's predilection for Offenbach's La Belle Hé^lène [ibid p 495], but anticipates more particularly the music played at the Muffats' ball in Nana. The waltz from La Blonde Vénus, itself modelled on Offenbach's operettas, which Zola detested, launched Nana's career in Ch. I and recalls, at this crucial point of the Muffats' fortunes, the demythification of the Greek gods in that work. Evoked several times as a "valse canaille", the music seems to Zola

"quelque vent de la chair, venu de la rue, balayant tout un â[^]ge mort dans la hautaine demeure, emportant le passé des Muffat, un siècle d'honneur et de foi endormi sous les plafonds"
[RM II p 1420]

(1) Compare the Bal Robert, mentioned in L'Assommoir, where "on laissait les cavaliers et leurs dames s'embrasser au fond, sans les déranger" [RM II p 743]

One may reflect that "balayer tout un âge mort" need not be in itself a bad thing, and that "un siècle d'honneur et de foi" serves no purpose if it is "endormi", but Zola's stance appears to be condemnatory; both the Count and the Countess have betrayed a trust, and the ball symbolises the ruin of their caste in several ways. It celebrates the marriage of their daughter to Daguinet, "amant de coeur" of the Count's mistress; it obliges Muffat to countenance in public his wife's lover, the commoner Fauchery; and it has the added piquancy of a deliberate "déclassement", with its five hundred invitations "lancées un peu dans tous les mondes" [ibid p 1419]. Zola stresses the significance of this ball as a definitive step towards social disgrace. Condemnation comes initially from Mme Chantereau, representing the old order.

"on affichait son luxe, on introduisait chez soi l'écume de Paris; et rien de plus naturel si des promiscuités pareilles pourrissaient ensuite le foyer" [ibid p 1426]

Further comment is Zola's own.

"Tout le luxe de cette fin d'hiver était là, le monde du plaisir avec ses tolérances, ce qu'une maîtresse de maison ramasse parmi ses liaisons d'un jour, une société où se coudoyaient de grands noms et de grandes hontes, dans le même appétit de jouissances".

[ibid]

Zola here links the ball to the twin notions of "jouissance" and "promiscuité" previously noted in public eating. The implication in the latter case was that a function normally reserved for family or other intimate circles is debased by becoming a mass activity. Dancing, on the other hand, is normally a social occasion - one would have difficulty in finding, in the whole series of novels, any examples of solitary dancing. Zola seems to condemn "promiscuity" as a particular vice of the Muffat ball, but, by implication, the Saccards' ball degrades the participants in the choice of music.

This tendency by Zola to see dancing as a form of promiscuity has evident links with the dance as a licensed form of erotic display.

Significantly, the ball which draws least adverse comment from Zola is the children's fancy-dress ball in Une Page d'Amour, where the erotic context disappears. On the other hand, the thin social veneer over the appetites breaks down more quickly here than at an adult function, and Zola notes the rapid progress of "la jouissance", as will be seen. The Préfet's ball at Niort in Son Excellence Eugène Rougon affords examples of both types of promiscuity. The social rank of each major guest is detailed, and frequently recalled, with particular emphasis on the sexual attraction felt by the local headmaster's wife towards the Parisian upstart Gilquin, Rougon's proletarian henchman

"accentuait les mouvements des hanches, en rejetant en arrière son torse de beau danseur des bals publics, pointe canaille dont le haut goût ravissait la galerie".

[RM II p 273]

Zola's ironic juxtaposing of "pointe canaille" and "haut goût" emphasises the disapproval he evidently feels, and encompasses also a judgement on a provincial society ready to adopt any Parisian model as correct. Although details of the music played at Niort are not vouchsafed, Zola offers an interesting variation on the "canaille" theme by showing the spread of the dancing to the populace outside the hall, where "l'orchestre s'entendait si distinctement que des gamins, en bas, organisaient des galops sur les trottoirs" [ibid p 264].

It should be noted that the dances of a more bourgeois characters, including the stifflingly dull house-party at the palace of Compiègne in Son Excellence Eugène Rougon, carry no such suggestion of working-class behaviour as those analysed above.

Nonetheless, all levels of society participate in the feverish rush for gratification in their dances, and the atmosphere of licence and disorder often carries intimations of apocalyptic doom awaiting the characters, or the whole of society. Thus, in La Curée, the image of flowing water suggests the helplessness of dancers caught in the vortex. Zola's magnificently evocative passage deserves to be quoted at length.

"Le large balancement des couples allait et venait, emplissait la longue galerie, sautant sous le fouet des cuivres, se balançant au bercement des violons. Les costumes, ce flot de femmes de tous les pays et de toutes les époques, roulait, avec un fourmillement, une bigarrure d'étoffes vives. Le rythme, après avoir mêlé et emporté les couleurs, dans un tohu-bohu cadencé, ramenait brusquement, à certains coups d'archet, la même tunique de satin rose, le même corsage de velours bleu, à côté du même habit noir. Puis un autre coup d'archet, une sonnerie des cornets à pistons, poussaient les couples, les faisaient voyager à la file autour du salon, avec des mouvements balancés de nacelle s'en allant à la dérive, sous un souffle de vent qui a brisé l'amarre. Et toujours, sans fin, pendant des heures".

[RM I p 557]

The vocabulary of movement ("allait et venait", "flot", "roulait", "emporté", "ramenait", "poussaient", "voyager" etc.) creates an impression of helplessness, intensified by the stress on the female dancers, and on their passivity. Pushed off by the violin bows, blown away by the wind instruments, they resemble fragile boats ("nacelles"), conjuring up images of instability, of a precarious hold on reality, as their motley costumes confirm. They symbolise humanity ("tous les pays ... toutes les époques"), caught in a movement which they cannot escape, constantly returning. Dante's vision of the swirling forms of those guilty of lust may be at the origin of Zola's evocation, but the description also recalls the earlier paragraph in La Curée in which the author conjures up a picture of the Seine as sewer, carrying the debris of a pleasure-loving society, "tout ce que la brutalité du désir et le contentement immédiat de l'instinct jettent sur la rue, après l'avoir brisé et souillé". In that passage, too, "Jusqu'à minuit, les violons chantaient", since music accompanies

the dance and the theatre, two forms of the pursuit of pleasure [RM I p 435].

More particularly, Zola clearly intends the increasingly frenzied dancing at the Saccards' party to reflect Renée's own disintegrating persona, an aim reinforced by the use of Renée's consciousness as vehicle for the descriptions of the dancers. Scenes of dancing punctuate Renée's search for, and confrontation with, Maxime, and her final long self-analysis in the bedroom takes place whilst a single (though prolonged) dance, the 'cotillon' is being executed in the salon below. The final paragraph of the chapter shows another insight on the part of Renée, this time into the nature of the society in which she moves, symbolised by "ce tourbillonnement des jupes, ce piétinement des jambes" [ibid p 579]. The choice of nouns again underlines the sense of purposeless movement, as does Zola's positioning of Renée; "placée en contrebas, elle voyait la furie des pieds, le pêle-mêle des bottes vernies et des chevilles blanches" [ibid pp 579-80]. This curious viewpoint emphasises the mechanical nature of the dancing, dissociated from the higher functions, and establishes the apocalyptic, expressionistic nature of Renée's vision. Her hallucination is that "un souffle de vent allait enlever les robes", and she sees the dance as an image of her own life.

"ces épaules nues, ces bras nus, ces chevelures nues qui volaient, qui tourbillonnaient, prises, jetées et reprises, au fond de cette galerie, où la valse de l'orchestre s'affolait, où les tentures rouges se pâmaient sous les fièvres dernières du bal, lui apparurent comme l'image tumultueuse de sa vie à elle, de ses nudités, de ses abandons".

[ibid p 580]

Renée's insight firmly links her particular case to the society around her, of which she is both victim and mirror. It derives from her interior monologue before her bedroom mirror, as she realised the shamelessness of her costume, and "saw" Maxime and Saccard jointly stripping her. Here, Renée "sees" the dancers - or, more specifically, the women dancers - stripped as she was, and in the evocation of them, "prises, jetées et reprises", the role of woman as victim of man is enacted in the dance itself.

The images further recall the vision of the Seine as sewer, with the "noeuds de dentelles laissés sur les divans, chevelures oubliées dans les fiacres" [ibid p 435] among its debris.

Earlier, Zola has established links between Renée's story and the régime which countenances such immorality, by his inventions for the "cotillon" figures. The dossier of La Curée carries a list of such figures drawn up by Zola, with details of their execution⁽¹⁾. Amongst those noted from his informants, Zola eventually used "Les Colonnes", "Le Changement de Dames" and "L'Echarpe", combining this latter figure with "Les Fleurs", when M. Simpson has to choose between two partners enmeshed in the scarf thrown by the caller. All of these involve some degree of promiscuity, as Zola describes them, and indeed Zola qualifies "Les Colonnes" as "indécence" [ibid p 566]. The author adds further figures, apparently of his own invention, as political comments on the Second Empire. Thus, "Les Points Noirs" alludes to a speech by the Emperor on foreign policy, whilst "La Guerre du Mexique" reduces that disastrous adventure to the level of a party game, though both figures have also an immodest aspect. The importance given by Zola to these cotillon figures indicates a serious attempt to link the pleasure-seeking society and its immoralities (the ladies "captured" by the scarf are the lesbian couple; the "Changement de Dames" and the "Colonnes" involve partner-changing) with the political scenes, a link already suggested in Renée's encounter with the Emperor, and implicit throughout the stories of Renée and of Saccard. It is, indeed, the spectacle of the "changement de dames" figures which prompts Renée's final vision of the apocalyptic dispersal of her friends switching partners with apparent impunity.

Similar intimations of impending catastrophe attend the Muffats' ball in Nana. Zola offers no equivalent here to Renée's disordered point of view,

(1) Nouvelles Acquisitions Françaises 10282: Oeuvres d'Emile Zola 18, La Curée II fos. 378 +

and only the most tenuous of suggestions as to the origins of one facet of the unreal elements of the ball: the vapid La Faloise's much-repeated joke that Nana has been invited and will soon appear, establishes her "presence" at the event which regroups so many of her circle, so enabling Zola to evoke her as a phantom. The first element of unreality has already been noted, in Zola's suggestion that the countess's chaise-longue has somehow been "multipliée, élargie, jusqu'à remplir l'hôtel entier d'une voluptueuse paresse, d'une jouissance aiguë" [RM II p 1420]. Zola's chief metaphor is his suggestion that the dancing is literally causing the collapse of the Muffats' mansion, just as Nana, whose "valse canaille ... pénétrait le vieil hôtel d'une onde sonore" [ibid] has ruined the "house" of Muffat.

"un nouveau quadrille donnait au plancher du salon un léger balancement comme si la vieille demeure eût fléchi sous le branle de la fête". [ibid p 1426]

The waltz becomes "une reprise plus haute du plaisir battant le vieil hôtel come une marée montante" [ibid p 1429]. A further dimension of hallucination is added when "la foule des invités, multipliée dans les glaces, semblait s'élargir" [ibid], and as the promenading couples "accentuaient davantage le branle des planchers" [ibid]. This vibration, coupled with the light from the garden lanterns, becomes "la flambée dernière, où craquait l'antique honneur brûlant aux quatre coins du logis" [ibid]. Zola moves imperceptibly from a vision of the downfall of the Muffats to a more general view of the upper classes. If, in this particular house, "la fêlure augmentait; elle lézardait la maison, elle annonçait l'effondrement prochain" [ibid], the evocation of Nana's phantom presence affects a wider circle:

"la valse sonnait le glas d'une vieille race, pendant que Nana, invisible, épanouie au-dessus du bal avec ses membres souples, décomposait ce monde, le pénétrait du ferment de son odeur flottant dans l'air chaud, sur le rythme canaille de la musique".

[ibid pp 1429-30]

The evocation of the dancers themselves shows a similar progression from an impressionistic haze towards a more disturbing notation which Joy Newton has compared to the techniques and subject-matter of the Expressionist group of painters.⁽¹⁾ In his earlier picture of the crowd, the dancers as individuals have disappeared, replaced by indications of shapes, of light and shade, of glitterings and tremblings:

"Des robes claires passaient, se mêlaient, au milieu des taches sombres des habits; tandis que la grande lumière mettait, sur la houle des têtes, des éclairs de bijoux, un frémissement de plumes blanches, une floraison de lilas et de roses".
[ibid p 1422]

To his visual impression, Zola adds scent and sound, the latter being fragmented into the mere "notes vives de l'orchestre". Most strikingly, the novelist's eye retains momentary glimpses of individual dancers:

"Par moments, dans la pâleur brouillée des têtes, se détachait un visage de femme, emporté par la danse, aux yeux brillants, aux lèvres entrouvertes, avec le coup du lustre sur la peau blanche".
[ibid p 1426]

Familiar to us through the medium of film, such frozen images show Zola's awareness of the disturbing effect created by this dislocation of normal vision, a technique exploited by painters and film-makers in later years.

It becomes increasingly clear that, for Zola, ballroom scenes bear little relation to observed reality, unlike their precursor in Madame Bovary. Each description, with the usual exception of the improvised and sluggish dancing at Compiègne in Son Excellence Eugène Rougon, contains suggestions of folly and, indeed, of hell. The second ball, in the last-named novel, set in Niort, has as its keynote light, the "clarté extraordinaire" conferred

(1) Joy Newton, in a series of articles, notably in Cahiers Naturalistes Nos. 33, 34, 41 has revealingly analysed Zola's transposition to the novel of certain specific techniques of the Impressionist painters, but also goes farther, seeing in some passages by Zola a striking anticipation of such painters as Munch.

by additional chandeliers at the Préfecture.

Images of light and heat come to dominate the description, even in metaphors: "Niort ne se souvenait pas d'un tel éclat" [RM II p 264].

"Mais le flamboiement des six fenêtres du grand salon éclairait toujours la place de la lueur vive du plein jour; l'orchestre avait des voix de cuivre plus retentissantes". [ibid p 270]

The unnatural 'daylight' on the square outside, from which the crowds view the dancing, suggests perversity as much as splendour, and the brass instruments, which alone are mentioned in these descriptions, provide associations of heat, in the "éclats de trompette" [ibid p 273]. The dancers constantly pause for refreshment, either drinking or fanning themselves [ibid p 271], until the final evocation summarises the hellish atmosphere in its first sentence: "Le bal flambait" [ibid p 272].

Once again, promiscuity reigns, evidenced at Niort by the re-forming of couples among the various political groups present, and culminating in the implied seduction of a local dignitary's wife by the crass Gilquin, whose dancing "soulevait un murmure d'admiration", public approval of loose behaviour.

Noise, rather than light, dominates at the children's ball in Une Page d'Amour:

"Les enfants, dans l'emportement des derniers quadrilles, tapaient plus fort des talons. Des rires argentins sonnaient, des voix d'oiseaux laissaient échapper de légers cris de plaisir. Une fraîcheur montait de cette ronde d'innocents lâchés dans un galop de petits démons". [RM II p 901]

This last image, tellingly contrasting the "innocents" and the "démons", underlines the potential destructiveness of these children, already seen demolishing an elaborate meal. Zola's indulgent view of this ball, his lightness of approach and his sense of the comedy of the scene, spring largely from the absence of any erotic element among the juvenile guests.

At the same time, they present "un monde en raccourci" [ibid p 900], and display appetites closer to the surface than those of their adult counterparts; the "cris de plaisir" cited earlier have no direct equivalent at any other ball in Zola's novels. Zola skilfully deploys suggestions of innocence, of "une gaieté plus claire" [ibid], but the disquiet remains. The fancy-dress, "les modes de tous les peuples, les fantaisies du roman et du théâtre" [ibid], finally becomes hallucinatory. Many guests sport similar costumes ("Il y avait déjà trois Arlequins, quatre Polichinelles ..." [ibid p 891]), in particular five sisters all dressed as Red Riding Hood.

"Les Chaperons Rouges semblaient se multiplier, il y avait partout des toquets et des robes de satin ponceau à bandes de velours noir".

[ibid p 900]

To this degree, then, the children's ball partakes of the qualities which Zola finds in adult dances elsewhere, though the tone is set by the children, rather than by the adults present. Thus, Dr. Deberle's words to Héléne, "Je vous aime" can be seen as "innocent" in the context of the presence of children, but also as ironically contrasted with the sexless friendship of the young guests, and of Lucien Deberle and Jeanne Grandjean in particular. Significantly, the rôle of Mme Deberle's younger sister Pauline assumes its greatest importance at this ball, as she mediates between adults and children, and participates like a child in the dancing.⁽¹⁾

Children also "exorcise", to some degree, the wedding ball at the Hôtel du Louvre in Pot-Bouille. Zola's description of this is fragmented, since the ball is the occasion of a family quarrel, and no major set-piece emerges. The author notes early in his evocations the presence of

(1) Pauline, of marriageable age but still drawn towards the world of childhood, contrasts in turn with the younger, pre-adolescent Jeanne, careful for her elaborate Japanese costume, and far more 'adult' in her judgements and feelings.

children ("Des fillettes, dans un coin, sautaient ensemble" [RM III p 155]). Later, presumably the same children, "deux petites filles, vaincues par la fatigue, s'étaient endormies aux bras l'une de l'autre" [ibid p 157]. The sexless innocence of these vignettes counteracts the marriage-market atmosphere of this ball, and the insane jealousy of Théophile Vabre, but the final picture reveals that Zola is not yet ready to accept that dancing can be an innocent activity. The old libertine Bachelard is discovered "dansant devant Gueulin un pas de la dernière indécence" [ibid p 160], scandalising the other guests.

In his evocation of this private ball, Zola repeats many themes already familiar, noting the heat, the presence of a buffet, and the acceleration of the dancing towards the end of the evening.

"...la chaleur grandissait, le buffet s'emplissait de messieurs, s'épongeant le front" [ibid p 155]

"Il y eut un galop final, la société se lâchait dans la chaleur étouffante, dans la clarté rousse des bougies, dont les flammes vacillantes faisaient éclater les bobèches" [ibid p 160]

Here the quality of the light ("clarté rousse") and the bursting of the candleholders suggest a hellish atmosphere, but the chief novelty of Zola's notation of this ball lies in the encroachment of the dancers on the space occupied by other guests. Zola ascribes this widening of the dancers' circle to the lively polka, which "emporta autour du salon des couples, déroulant toute une queue de longues traînes" [ibid p 154].

"Mais lorsqu'une valse ou un polka revenait, les hommes devaient céder la place, des couples élargissaient la danse, des jupes rasaient le parquet, soulevant dans la chaleur des bougies la fine poussière et l'odeur musquée des toilettes". [ibid p 157]

This passage recalls the whirling dresses of La Curée, but a more specifically erotic note is struck, as unattached men must give way to couples, and the supposedly aphrodisiac musk scent rises from the ladies' dresses.

We may pass from Zola's mention of this allegedly erotic perfume to a consideration of one last element of the dance, the smell it generates. Although Zola's intention seems to be to portray the dance as a symptom of the search for pleasure, it emerges most often as a singularly unpleasurable exercise. Not least among its unattractive features are the dust and the smell which accompany excessive heat, the glare and the crowded rooms. Smell be either the natural stink of sweat, or a refined substitute for it. Typical passages may be cited, in an ascending state of sophistication:

"La terre battue, trop arrosée, faisait boue sous les lourdes semelles; et bientôt, de toutes les cottes remuées, des vestes et des corsages que mouillaient, aux aisselles, de larges taches de sueur, il monta une violente odeur de boue, qu'accentuait l'âcreté filante des lampes".

[La Terre RM IV p558]

"Le jour tombait, les trois musiciens faisaient rage, on ne voyait plus, dans la salle, que le remuement des hanches et des gorges, au milieu d'une confusion de bras. Un vacarme accueillit les quatre lampes, et brusquement tout s'éclaira, les faces rouges, les cheveux dépeignés, collés à la peau, les jupes volantes, balayant l'odeur forte des couples en sueur".

[Germinal RM III p 1268]

"L'orchestre, de ses instruments de cuivre fêlés, jouait furieusement un quadrille, une tempête dont la salle tremblait; tandis que les danseurs, tapant des pieds, soulevaient une poussière qui alourdissait le flamboiement au gaz. La chaleur était à crever".

[L'Assommoir RM II p 739]

"Il faisait déjà chaud, un parfum pénétrant montait de ces tulles légers, de ces chiffonnages de satin et de soie, où les épaules nues pâlissaient, sous les notes vives de l'orchestre".

[Nana RM II p 1422]

(1) In the otherwise staid and desultory dancing after dinner at the Emperor's houseparty in Son Excellence Eugène Rougon, Zola has already noted the erotic appeal of long trains: "Mme de Combélot, en valsant, à demi pâmée entre les bras de M. de la Rouquette, venait d'envelopper d'un frolement de sa longue traîne, les bas de soie de Sa Majesté"

[RM II p 171]

"Une poussière lumineuse flottait, comme envolée des chevelures, des jupes et des bras cerclés d'or, qui battaient l'air. Il y avait trop d'or, trop de musique et trop de chaleur".

[Son Excellence Eugène Rougon RM II p 271]

From the crudity of the peasants' jigging to the excessive splendours of a Prefectoral ball, Zola's comments reveal his disgust with the animality and discomfort of the dance. If the proletarian dance-halls accentuate and partly justify this disgust by introducing promiscuity and public spectacle to their other defects, the private functions bear their share of opprobrium. As has already been noted, Sabine Muffat has invited her guests indiscriminately, and the Prefet's ball can be viewed by the two thousand townsfolk thronging the square. The clodhopping country folk in La Terre may give off "une violente odeur de bouc", their wealthier counterparts in Nana exude "un parfum pénétrant"; the clothes of the poor may cling to sweaty bodies, but the rich display conspicuous carelessness in their use of clothes, "chiffonnages de satin et de soie". The "remuement des hanches et des gorges", the "confusion de bras" of Germinal are matched by the "épaules nues" of Nana, and by the "bras cerclés d'or qui battaient l'air" in Son Excellence Eugène Rougon. Dust may be thick enough to "alourdir" the gas jets in L'Assommoir, but it cannot be banished from the elegant hall at Niort, where "une poussière lumineuse flottait" [ibid], and the omnipresent noise of feet and of instruments, even of three players who "faisaient rage" in Germinal, and especially the sound of cracked instruments (L'Assommoir) and leads to the judgement, applicable to all dances in Zola's novels: "trop de musique et trop de chaleur" [Son Excellence Eugène Rougon RM II p 271].

Yet, clearly, the dancers seek out these situations, and the dance remains perhaps the most forcefully expressed condemnation by Zola of "la jouissance". The transformations of the salon culminate in this recurrent manifestation of the search for pleasure. From a vague malaise in the

presence of the salon, Zola progresses to a total condemnation of the most overtly hedonistic of its developments. Zola's solution to the problem posed by the existence of the salon in bourgeois life is a negative one; the total elimination of the room, and hence of the activities it harbours.

BREAKING DOWN THE CATEGORIES

The preceding chapters have observed the usual compartmentalisation of the domestic space, giving separate consideration to bedroom, dining-room and salon. Only when relevant has a cross-reference been adduced, to underline a point. It now becomes appropriate, in the light of certain very evident examples, to investigate to what degree these categories fluctuate in Zola's novels. The various functions of the rooms are less rigidly fixed than might at first appear, and it is intended, in the course of the present chapter, to trace the extent of the departures from their designated purpose.

However, it should first briefly be noted that Zola blurs the rigid distinctions between rooms of different types by the very process of describing. It is not, perhaps, necessary to stress at this juncture the identification of all three types of room with gratification. It may be less evident that this common element is underlined by similar approaches to description. A case in point is the use of a refined, almost baudelairean, synaesthesia, applied to the evocation of the three types of domestic interiors.

Thus, the techniques already analysed when considering the depiction of Henriette Desforges's salon in Au Bonheur des Dames are comparable to those brought to bear upon Renée's dining-room in La Curée; an insistence on the quality of light, on textures and on fragmented sounds, all noted as fluctuating on a time-scale. Indeed, Zola's recurring use of notations such as smell, noise and uncomfortable heat in the confined spaces of the room can be seen as a constant in his approach to the description of them.

Imagery can also forge links between descriptions of otherwise unrelated areas. Two such links can be observed in La Curée and Nana, where the bodies of Renée and Nana, metaphorically evoked, extend the scope of the descriptions of Renée's private suite and of Muffat's refurbished salon; and a similar quasi-religious imagery is used for both Renée's dining-table and Nana's bed. Such a use of imagery suggests a consistent view of certain types of room, more in keeping with their atmosphere and with their rôle in the novel than with their actual designated function.

A further area of interest is Zola's perception of space. Rarely does he comment on the cramped dimensions of a room, even though several novels are set in working-class homes. He is more likely to note this indirectly, by mentioning the constraints resulting from bulky furniture, or from overcrowding. Thus, the sleeping arrangements of the Maheu family are perceived through the intermediary of Catherine who has to dress in the presence of her brothers, pick her way across the cluttered room and negotiate the equally cluttered landing.

"La porte vitrée était ouverte, on apercevait le couloir du palier, l'espèce de boyau où le père et la mère occupaient un quatrième lit, contre lequel ils avaient dû installer le berceau de la dernière venue, Estelle..."

[Germinal RM III p 1143]

Far more frequently, Zola's notation of the dimensions of rooms indicates a preference for large sizes, part of the "gigantisme" informing so much of his work. Thus, even Tante Dide's hovel in La Fortune des Rougon possesses "une vaste cheminée" [RM I p 139], unlikely though such an epithet may seem. The exaggerated spaciousness of the homes of the wealthy may be more objectively justified, in such novels as La Curée,

Nana or Son Excellence Eugène Rougon, but the enlargement of the dimensions of domestic decors may probably best be interpreted as more or less overtly symbolic. Nana's bed, Gervaise's feast, Angélique's bedroom are cases in point. Certainly, such words as "vaste", "immense", "démessurément" recur in many of Zola's evocations of domestic rooms or furniture, creating affinities between areas of the house whose functions would otherwise divide them from each other.

Indeed, strict categorisation of interior decors becomes increasingly difficult to maintain, given the variety and extent of Zola's blurring of demarcation lines. In this respect, Borie's comment on Zola's work seems curious:

"Il sera fascinant d'accompagner son effort pour maintenir les cloisons étanches, de découvrir son angoisse à voir des confusions s'établir". (1)

Whilst it is certainly true that Zola sometimes implies a moral collapse amongst his characters through a change in room function or by means of a total displacement, it would appear to be at least equally characteristic of Zola's approach to the rooms in which his characters live that the basic functions of the compartments within the house may be altered almost at random, and without any particular necessity. Nor does such an adjustment of space, or overlap in the functions of spaces, necessarily imply a moral judgement, or an "angoisse" on the part of the novelist.

The clearest case of "décloisonnement" occurs, naturally enough, in the lives of the poor, for whom the compartment may serve for all functions. The extreme examples are the "niche" occupied by Père Bru in L'Assommoir, and the cellar of the ruined château taken over by Jésus-Christ and his daughter in La Terre, and where they are later joined by old Fouan.

(1) Borie op.cit. p 128.

"On donna au vieux la chambre de la fille, l'un des compartiments de l'ancienne cave, coupée en deux par une cloison de planches; et elle, complaisante, dut se retirer au fond, dans une excavation de la roche, qui formait comme une arrière-pièce".

[RM IV p 637]

Zola's picture of life in this makeshift home insists on the more joyous aspects of the arrangement, omitting the squalor which must accompany it. This emerges more clearly in the evocation of the shanty in La Cité de Naples, visited by Mme Caroline in L'Argent.

"Dans un coin, elle aperçut une paille, jetée simplement sur la terre battue. Aucun autre meuble n'était reconnaissable, parmi le pêle-mêle de tonneaux éclatés, de treillages arrachés, de corbeilles à demi-pourries, qui devaient servir de sièges et de tables. Les murs suintaient, d'une humidité gluante[...] Et l'odeur, l'odeur surtout était affreuse, l'abjection humaine dans l'absolu dénuement".

[RM V p 150]

This description serves as a prelude to a picture of moral squalor, when the child Victor is discovered to be the sexual partner of Mère Eulalie, the ageing costerwoman. His precocious and flaunted sexuality is shared by La Trouille in La Terre and both descriptions imply a high degree of promiscuity forced upon the inhabitants by their life-style. If Zola balks at having three generations of the Fouan family share one room, his accounts of their habits, though very amusing, indicate the gradual breakdown of old Fouan's moral scruples under the influence of his son and granddaughter.

Promiscuity similarly pervades the tiny flat occupied by the three Coupeaus after their expulsion from the shop in L'Assommoir. Nana's presence accentuates the moral collapse of the family, since she no longer has privacy at the critical age of puberty.

"Et encore la chambre était-elle large comme la main. Il fallait y faire tout, dormir, manger et le reste. Dans le cabinet, le lit de Nana tenait juste, elle devait se déshabiller chez son père et sa mère, et on laissait la porte ouverte, la nuit, pour qu'elle ne s'étouffât pas. C'était si petit que Gervaise avait cédé des affaires aux Poisson en quittant la boutique, ne pouvant tout caser. Le lit, la table, quatre chaises, le logement était plein".

[RM II p 672]

The words "...et le reste" may stand for the sexual and scatological activities which Zola later dared to spell out in similar sordid quarters described in La Terre and L'Argent, and the scene recalls Nana's spying on her parents in an earlier episode of the novel. Certainly, the sexual conflicts between parents and child which dominate the tensions within the family during their occupancy of the flat are exacerbated by the lack of private space. In contrast to this promiscuity, the Goujets, mother and son, lead rigidly compartmented lives, each bedroom fixed in its role, and indeed, fixed in time, since the mother's room remains untouched after her death, and the son's retains its adolescent quality into his middle age.

The Coupeaus sink to the lowest point on the social scale, and many other working-class families fare better in their accommodation. Even the miners in Germinal are able to separate their sleeping quarters from their living-room, and to them should be added the Buteau, Pichon and Misard families in La Terre, Pot-Bouille and La Bête Humaine, all of whom preserve the traditional division of the house into sleeping and eating areas at least. But the kitchen or dining-room becomes, as has been noted, the preferred social area of a number of bourgeois families who need not resort to this measure, and whose rejection of the more formal salon seems difficult to rationalise. (1)

This example of the transference of function from one room to another occurs with remarkable frequency in the Rougon-Macquart novels. To speak, as Borie does, of Zola's "effort pour maintenir les cloisons étanches" seems curious, given that the activities associated with part-

(1) J. Borie (op.cit. p 147) points out that Hélène Grandjean in Une Page d'Amour, yields to "la tentation de renverser les barrières" by spending too much time in the kitchen with her servant Rosalie. However, Hélène's apartment contains no salon in which the lady of the house may hold court.

icular areas of the house so often overlap, sometimes apparently gratuitously. Amongst the more explicable categories of overlapping is the close association of dancing with eating, the salon and the dining-room blending into one social event. Sometimes a dance is preceded by a separate formal meal, as in Une Page d'Amour or Son Excellence Eugène Rougon, sometimes accompanied by a buffet as in La Curée and Nana. Even the whole-hearted concentration on food at the popular feast in L'Assommoir may have been a prelude to dancing, though memories are clouded by drink:

"Peut-être bien, tout de même, qu'on avait dansé autour de la table, en se tenant par les mains. Ça se noyait dans un brouillard jaune, avec des figures rouges qui sautaient, la bouche fendue d'une oreille à l'autre."

[RM II p 594]

More surprising are the scenes depicting eating in bed, or in a bedroom. Such informal snacks enjoyed by the characters, who are always two in number, inevitably accompany a sexual relationship which may be either innocent or highly erotic. This polarisation emerges clearly in the participation of Séverine in two parallel encounters in La Bête Humaine, both in the same flat, and each preceded by an impromptu meal. The male partners change, and it is Séverine's attitude that differentiates the two. The first scene [RM IV pp 1005, 1010-1] progresses from the unsophisticated gaiety of the Roubauds' relief at escaping an official reprimand, to a growing sexual excitement on his part to which Severine reacts adversely, though "comme grise, étourdie de nourriture, et de vin", but refusing to yield. The second such episode has Jacques as her partner. Like the first, it culminates in a confession by Severine. The meal of cake and wine combines with the heat of the room to influence their passion, after an innocent enough start, reminiscent of the earlier episode.

"Tout de suite, ils s'assirent côte à côte, presque sur la même chaise, et le gâteau fut partagé, mangé avec une gaminerie d'amoureux. Elle se plaignait d'avoir soif, elle but coup sur coup deux verres de malaga, ce qui acheva de faire monter le sang à ses joues. Le poêle rougissait derrière leur dos, ils en sentaient l'ardent frisson".

[ibid p 1192]

Séverine's consciousness of parallels with the earlier scene clearly indicates the influence of the room on her.

"N'était-ce pas le déjeuner d'autrefois qui se continuait par ce gâteau, mangé sur la même table, au milieu des mêmes bruits? Une excitation croissante se dégageait des choses..."

[ibid]

This encounter culminates in a scene of erotic passion which effectively revokes the initial innocence of the picnic meal, and indicates the distance travelled by Séverine towards self-realisation through her passion for Jacques.

A similar improvised meal precedes the first lovemaking between Nana and Georges Hugon at her country house in Nana. The snack, "sur un guéridon roulé devant le feu, le dîner le plus drôle" [RM II p 1237], evidently is intended to convey lightheartedness, one aspect of Nana's "innocence" during this episode in the country. The nightgown which Georges is obliged to wear for the occasion conveys at once the naivety and the perversion present in the relationship, since it suggests both the "pensionnat" midnight feast and the lesbian side of Nana which surfaces in her friendship with Satin.

Innocence is also the keynote of the relationship between Pascal and Clotilde in Le Docteur Pascal, although they are already lovers when they eat, in her bedroom, a frugal meal imposed by their financial straits, but clearly linked to the examples already cited. Again, the improvisatory, picnic-like circumstances give rise to a feeling of gaiety and innocence.

"Ils s'enfermèrent, ils mirent le couvert sur une petite table, les pommes de terre au milieu, entre la salière et la carafe, et le panier de raisin sur une chaise à côté. Et ce fut un gala merveilleux, qui leur rappela l'exquis déjeuner qu'ils avaient fait, au lendemain des noces."

[RM V p 1127]

As always in this final novel, the bedroom is a place of joy, the erotic mystery dissipated by the frankness of the relationship and the equality of the partners. The false innocence of the episode between Georges and Nana prefigures this idyllic scene, but here the meal prolongs an established relationship rather than initiating it. Similarly, as the allusion to the "lendemain des noces" shows, the dining-room is evoked by a recollection of Clotilde's first attempt at cooking, after the first night of love. As the lovemaking "exorcised" the negative association of the bedroom with "la jouissance", so Clotilde's housewifery "exorcised" the elements of over-indulgence from the dining-room, and the picnic in the bedroom serves to consolidate and, indeed, to clarify the issue by bringing both activities to one room. And, as has been noted already, in the happy house of this final novel, the salon has simply disappeared.

Mention should be made of situations showing characters actually eating in bed, an activity which Zola seems to disapprove of. He depicts an innocent enough early example in the meals of "des carottes et des navets volés" consumed by the children Cadine and Marjolin in Le Ventre de Paris, in the old market-cart which serves as their bed. [RM I p 764] Only the mention "volés" disturbs the charming picture, and prepares the reader for the midnight feasts of stolen food, shared later with Léon, the apprentice "charcutier". Later examples are comically vulgar. Gilquin and a certain Eulalie, in Son Excellence Eugène Rougon, consumed in bed "un gâteau et une bouteille de vin" [RM II p 206], and Nana and Fontan quarrel about crumbs in the bed after eating a cake "dans le lit, parce qu'il ne faisait pas chaud et que ça ne valait pas la peine d'allumer du feu" [RM II p 1294].

Even these encounters retain a certain innocence, despite the blows which Nana suffers from her lover. But the ravaged bedroom of the "monsieur distingué" in Pot-Bouille, glimpsed by Octave, contains amid the tumbled

bedclothes "un reste de homard et des bouteilles entamées" [RM III p 252], suggestive of high living and correspondingly high vices, whilst the most perverse extension of the notion of "eating" occurs in L'Argent, where, amid the trappings already associated with other scenes of bedroom feasts - lovers before a roaring fire, for example - baroness Sandorff is surprised in the act of fellatio on the passive Saccard [RM V pp 211-2]. This act, merely suggested by Zola in the text, is far more explicit in his preparatory notes [RM V p 1326]. The episode casts a retrospective light upon the implication of Zola's earlier linking of the consumption of food with a sexual activity, in scenes already cited above. Thus, the almost sexual flush produced in Séverine by the wine drunk in an overheated room, the physical effect on Nana of the crumbs in the bed ("Elle en sentait jusque sous ses cuisses, elle était dévorée partout. Une seule miette la brûlait, le faisait se gratter au sang" RM II p 1294: NB the word "dévoree") and, in many contexts in Le Docteur Pascal, Zola's frequent use of the words "banquet" and "régal" to describe Clotilde's offering of herself to Pascal, may all be seen as sexual metaphors, in the same way as baroness Sandorff's oral sex with Saccard prolongs the metaphor of eating.

A further metaphor links the bedroom with the act of eating in L'Assommoir. The Coupeau family's bed has been pawned bit by bit, the handfuls of mattress wool being used in their turn as pledges, in order to buy food and drink; Zola can thus comment "ils avaient ainsi achevé de manger le dodo" [RM II p 750]. This vivid phrase draws a part of its intensity from the implied reversal of the act of feeding - the belly of the mattress being emptied in order to fill the bed's occupants.

Further breaches of the rigid divisions between the functions of rooms can be detected in the occasional references to sleeping at table. Guests at banquets may conclude the meal in a semi-comatose state, as in La Curée. but actual sleeping seems limited, naturally enough, to children such as Nana's son Louis. One interesting exception concerns the soldiers in La Débâcle, a novel in which many "normal" customs become displaced, so that eating and sleeping must be performed whenever and wherever the opportunity occurs. At one point, Jean almost sleeps when confronted by a correctly presented meal.

"On était dans la salle à manger, il y avait du pain et de la viande sur la table; mais il n'aurait pas eu la force de porter les morceaux à sa bouche".

[RM v p 554]

In the same room, Maurice sleeps on "un lit de sangle, dressé devant le poêle" [ibid], and Henriette transforms a divan into another bed, for Jean, who falls into sleep with "une gourmandise, une impatience d'enfant" [ibid p 555], thereby confirming the link with the act of eating, and with the children, who alone may with impunity sleep at table.

To list the numerous examples of eating and sleeping elsewhere than in the designated rooms would be tedious and unproductive. Zola's characters perform such acts in a wide variety of places, indoors and out, and that, in particular, scenes depicting the sexual act rarely occur in a bed, but include such varied and unlikely places as the stairs of a block of flats (the conception of Victor in L'Argent) and Marie Pichon's kitchen table in Pot-Bouille, another example of the link between sex and eating. The bed is, however, a frequent battleground between the sexes, and the bedroom the setting of many quarrels or discussions. Thus, Nana and Fontan, in the episode quoted above, not only eat, but also come to blows in bed. In La Fortune des Rougon [RM I p 270]. Félicité lectures Pierre

on the strategy of their plans whilst in bed. In La Curée [RM I p 470], Saccard visits Renée's bedroom only to discuss money matters, though he later demands his conjugal rights. Lisa in Le Ventre de Paris persuades her husband to abandon his flirtation with politics by lecturing him in bed [RM I pp 758-9], and the bed sees a quarrel between François and Marthe in La Conquête de Plassans [RM I p 1072]. A quarrel amusingly accompanies Berthe and Octave's preparations for adultery in Pot-Bouille [RM III pp 282-5], whilst in La Bête Humaine, sexual encounters in bed or in a bedroom are several times linked with violence and confessions of guilt.

Zola's readiness to disrupt normal patterns of behaviour seems suggestive. In their small way, all incidents which describe a displacement of accepted habits imply a breakdown of social standards, and, in the light of Zola's insistence on the hedonistic qualities attributed by him to the Second Empire, the gratifying of appetites outside the normal context points to the flaws in the régime, culminating in the total disruption depicted in La Débâcle.

Equally, a more personal preoccupation with the conflict between pattern and chaos, order and disorder, may be suspected, and here J. Borie's distinction between the two opposing principles is worthy of note. Borie postulates a division between hoarding and spending, between anality and sexuality, between the closed house and the open street, and, more specifically appropriate to the present discussion, between the "sanctuary" and the public room⁽¹⁾. Whilst recognising that Borie's thesis opens up fascinating possibilities it must be queried whether, at least in his contention that Zola finds it painful to alter the functions of domestic rooms, Borie demonstrably underestimates the wealth of evidence to the contrary.

(1) Borie, op.cit. pp 128-9.

The most telling argument against Borie's statement that Zola experiences distress when normal divisions are breached lies in the large number of domestic interiors in the Rougon-Macquart novels which undergo a radical transformation, as opposed to those considered above, the temporary site of an unexpected activity. The novels abound in examples of rooms whose function has been deliberately changed, usually permanently; equally, Zola provides many evocations of dramatic changes in the character of rooms. Even excluding from the latter category such purely cosmetic changes as those wrought by Christine in tidying Claude's workroom in L'Oeuvre, or by Denise in her bedroom in Au Bonheur des Dames, there remain several interesting examples of rapid transformation, some already noted, such as Lisa's discovery of Florent's bedroom transformed into a revolutionary den in Le Ventre de Paris. Others call for further comment, including one or two which operate small miracles daily.

These are performed by Gervaise, who, "en un tour de main" [L'Assommoir RM II p 656] prepares the bedroom for Maman Coupeau's wake, but had practice in her first apartment, where

"ils fermaient les rideaux de l'alcôve, des rideaux de calicot blanc; et la chambre se trouvait transformée en salle à manger". [ibid p 465]

Equally, in L'Argent, the impoverished Beauvilliers ladies find consolation in the versatility of their single room:

"Deux petits lits emplissaient l'alcôve, et lorsque les châssis, tendus du même papier que les murs, étaient clos, la chambre se transformait en salon". [RM V pp 366-7]

Such operations clearly reflect a precarious existence, a tension between the realities of poverty and the aspiration to higher things. More relevant to the present argument are those transformations which have become permanent.

The most extensive reworking of a private dwelling concerns the Hôtel d'Orviedo in L'Argent, where a re-structuring of the entire building provides three new apartments. Apart from purely mechanical reasons of plot (the proximity of Saccard and the Hamelins on this site), it may be considered to have some symbolic value, since the fortune of the Princesse d'Orviedo similarly undergoes a metamorphosis, through speculation, into charitable works. The vast, empty Hôtel d'Orviedo becomes inhabited once more, just as the idle money is put to uses, some of them perhaps dubious, but of benefit to many in their ultimate influence. More significantly, the transformation of the Hôtel d'Orviedo displays several features which link it to other transformed house-interiors in other novels, although Zola offers little detail in his evocation of the restructuring of the rooms into apartments. The whole building has already been the object of restoration by the wealthy Prince, "démolie en partie, rebâtie dans de plus sévères proportions" [RM V p 50]. Subsequently, the widowed princess is reputed to have "déménagé violemment le rez-de-chaussée et le premier étage", before she "s'était retirée, comme une recluse, dans trois petites pièces du second" [ibid p 52]. The utilisation of the rest of the building offers an interesting example of Zola's ingenuity in reshaping the internal features of the house, since the different new apartments are separated by a temporary barrier on an internal staircase, where "la princesse [...] s'était contentée de faire condamner la porte, à l'aide de deux fortes vis" [ibid p 51]. Thus, the splendour of the principal apartment and of the grand staircase, Saccard's territory, remain clearly if precariously divided from the more modest rooms of the Princess and of her tenants the Hamelin siblings, who share with her the service stairs. The ingenuity of Zola's stratagems can be seen to reflect his concern with social relativity: only Saccard's apartment is evoked at this stage, with stress upon the superfluous luxury of it, for one person's need, and with the ascetic surroundings of

the Princess being left implicit. Moreover, the door-barricade, seemingly strong ("deux fortes vis") can be breached - to no result in the case of the Princess, who rejects Saccard's proposal of marriage, but more effectively in that of Caroline Hamelin who yields to Saccard's importuning.

Amongst the other novels, L'Oeuvre provides a rich source of transformed domestic interiors. Even the bourgeois Sandoz couple sacrifice Utility to Art, in their determination to instal a piano, despite evident strain.

"La salle à manger où l'on passa était si petite que, voulant y installer le piano, on avait dû percer une sorte d'alcôve, dans un cabinet noir, réservé jusque-là à la vaisselle."
[RM IV pp 191-2]

This expedient springs from no basic need, but rather from a desire to embellish, to impose a different order on the tractable nature of the rooms. More frequent demands are made of Christine and Claude in their attempts to render various studios inhabitable. Already in their cottage at Bennecourt, the dining-room had become a workroom [ibid p 145], but later, in the rue de Douai, the inverse occurs:

"Cet atelier de la rue de Douai, petit et incommode, était accompagné seulement d'une étroite chambre et d'une cuisine grande comme une armoire; il fallait manger dans l'atelier, le ménage y vivait, avec l'enfant toujours en travers des jambes".

[ibid p 202]

A subsequent move to the rue Tourlaque involves more drastic modifications.

"Cette halle de quinze mètres sur dix ne leur donnait qu'une pièce, un hangar de bohémiens faisant tout en commun. Il fallut que le peintre lui-même, devant la mauvaise grâce du propriétaire, la coupât, dans un bout, d'une cloison de planches, derrière laquelle il ménagea une cuisine et une chambre à coucher".

[ibid p 237]

If the first quotation indicates a displaced function rather than a restructuring, the situation is nonetheless permanent for the duration

of the family's residence. Even here, however, a hint of a more radical reshaping may be seen in the phrase "une cuisine grande comme une armoire", hinting that this may well have been the first use of the kitchen space. Restructuring becomes necessary in the featureless "halle" which forms the second apartment, though only "devant la mauvaise grâce du propriétaire", and at the tenant's own cost in labour at least. Here perhaps, the "angoisse" of which Borie speaks can be seen to exist, if only in the landlord's reluctance to have his property altered. Such conflicts between the claims of family life and the demands of Claude's artistic vocation lie at the heart of the novel, and Zola's notation of changes imposed by one or other of these tellingly exemplifies his theme.

On a more modest scale, Claude's work on the room resembles the rebuilding of the interior of the Hôtel d'Orviedo, since he strives to create a family interior from a "hangar de bohémiens". In both novels, a useless or unused space has been made more productive, life may approximate more closely to the norm, though in both cases that family life remains truncated. The family for which Claude labours produces one retarded child, and the inhabitants of the Hotel d'Orviedo either may not produce children (the Hamelin siblings) or refuse to do so (the Princess). In Saccard's relationship with Caroline there are no offspring other than the child she discovers for him, the abject Victor. Similarly, the Sandoz couple remain childless despite their efforts to create a beautiful and artistic home. Zola might be accused, on the basis of these examples, of equating re-structuring with lack of fulfilment elsewhere.

However, Zola several times contrives a situation in his novels whereby a family is constrained to accept another member, or even an outsider, into the household. The disruption to the life of the family which such decisions cause is naturally reflected in household arrangements. Sometimes, the insertion can be achieved without overt strain, either in relationships or accommodation. This certainly seems the case in La Joie de Vivre, where

the reallocation of rooms has been carried out before the child's arrival. Nonetheless, the outsider Pauline does indeed prove to be the source of discord, despite her own excellent qualities. Similarly, the purely financial arrangement whereby the Maheus take Etienne as lodger to replace Zacharie on the latter's marriage seems to operate smoothly, though the consequences for the family are, in the long term, disastrous. In contrast, old Fouan, in La Terre, seriously disrupts arrangements at the homes of his sons when he goes to live with each in turn. Zola gives no details of how he was accommodated by his daughter Fanny Delhomme: we may presume that he had his own room in that comfortable bourgeois home.

"Chez les Buteau, on lui donna, derrière la cuisine, la grande pièce du rez-de-chaussée, où, jusque-là, on n'avait serré que la provision de pommes de terre et les betteraves pour les vaches [...]. D'ailleurs, on laissa tout, on ne débarrassa qu'un angle, pour y mettre un lit de fer, une chaise et une table de bois blanc. Le vieux parut enchanté". [RM IV p 620]

No member of the family is actually displaced by Fouan's arrival, nor does his presence alter the basic function of the room in question. The substitute bedroom set up in an evidently lowly area of the building indicates the future status of its occupant, who, we may note, merely "parut enchanté". Later, in the improvised dwelling of his other son Hyacinthe ("Jésus-Christ") already noted above, Fouan displaces his grand-daughter, Olympe ("La Trouille") from her "room", "l'un des compartiments de l'ancienne cave", though the disruption is attenuated by the epithet "complaisante" applied to the girl. However, Zola indicates that she "dut se retirer au fond", into what was, at best, "comme une arrière-pièce" [ibid p 637].

It may be pointed out that, in the disorderly life of this pair, the insertion of a relative can make little disruption, less, perhaps, than into the seasonal routine of Buteau whose back room will presumably be filled by the crops which his father has caused to be moved to a corner.

A contrasting example, this time of intrusion into a highly ordered family, occurs in Le Ventre de Paris, when Florent arrives at the home of his half-brother, Quenu. The family itself does not suffer disturbance but the apprentices form an extension of that family, both in function - Léon as understudy to Quenu, Augustine as helper to Lisa - and in physique. By displacing Augustine, Florent is indirectly breaching the defences of the family, so that, although Lisa's acceptance of Florent seems complacent enough, it is her own younger self whom she is obliged to re-accommodate, a decision which indirectly colours her later attitudes and actions. The initial insertion of Florent seems easy.

"Dans la pièce nue, où il n'y avait que des chaises, Lisa poussa une porte, lui montra un cabinet, en disant que la fille de la boutique coucherait là, et que lui garderait la chambre du cinquième".

[RM I p 659]

The "pièce nue", mentioned earlier, [ibid p 655] as an antichamber to the "petit salon", seems conceived to convey an atmosphere of bleakness, its chairs possibly intended by Zola to indicate a sort of no-man's-land, an unallocated area of the family's quarters. The device of the "cabinet" avoids the impropriety of the "fille de la boutique" sleeping within the family's own recognised space, a further example of Zola's ingenuity in setting and solving problems. "Lisa poussa une porte"; the door to the "cabinet" evidently opens inwards, thereby affording a hint of the cramped quarters to which Augustine will be relegated, and which, to Lisa, can be equated with an affront to herself.

Amongst family groups, the Coupeaus stand out for the frequent strains placed upon them by changes of lodging and by intrusions into the family circle. Reference has already been made to their last, barely adequate, home, in which promiscuity reigns, and to the early deftness displayed by Gervaise in transforming the function of the couple's first flat. Equally, in the premises adjacent to her shop, Gervaise finds problems as soon as they move in, so that ingenuity and compromise become essential.

Even though Claude has been removed by a benefactor, it proves difficult to house the four remaining Coupeaus adequately, yet Gervaise pronounces their quarters to be "très convenable".

"Les Coupeau couchaient dans la première chambre, où l'on faisait la cuisine et où l'on mangeait; une porte, au fond, ouvrait sur la cour de la maison. Le lit de Nana se trouvait dans la chambre de droite, un grand cabinet, qui recevait le jour par une lucarne ronde, près du plafond. Quant à Etienne, il partageait la chambre de gauche avec le linge sale..."

[L'Assommoir RM II p 497]

We note here the multiple functions of the room, already evident in several other novels, and elsewhere in L'Assommoir, whilst the improvised sleeping space for Etienne anticipates old Fouan's lodging amongst the stored vegetables in La Terre. Nana's room, described as "un grand cabinet", with inadequate lighting, barely qualifies as a bedroom, and the direct communication between the main bedroom and the public courtyard underlines the precarious nature of these arrangements, since the family's living space, already threatened by the customers who will enter the shop itself, is not secure from invasion from the rear. In fact, Zola makes no use of this door in the action of the novel, but mention of its presence has produced a feeling of unease.

Both the shop and the adjacent flat undergo transformations as the family takes into its circle two outsiders, Maman Coupeau and Lantier. The former comes as a result of Gervaise's sense of family duty, tinged with a desire to spite her sister-in-law. Arguably, the old lady has a rightful place in the family circle, and her arrival causes relatively little dislocation, since Gervaise "mit son lit dans le grand cabinet où couchait Nana" [ibid p 524]. More stress arises from Maman Coupeau's furniture than from her presence, though Zola seems to assert the opposite.

"Le déménagement ne fut pas long, car Maman Coupeau, pour tout mobilier, avait ce lit, une vieille armoire de noyer qu'on plaça dans la chambre au linge sale, une table et deux chaises; on vendit la table, on fit rempailler les deux chaises".

[ibid]

However, mention of selling only one item concentrates attention on the sheer bulk of the remaining furniture, which the family nevertheless absorbs and even improves ("rempailler les deux chaises"). The more serious intrusion by Lantier entails a far greater disruption of living patterns, and specifically speaks of the breakdown of socially accepted behaviour, since the intruder is the wife's former lover, and father of one of the junior members of the family. Coupeau himself enthusiastically proposes solutions to the problems posed by the new arrangement.

"Et il expliqua que la chambre au linge sale, nettoyée, ferait une jolie pièce. Etienne coucherait dans la boutique, sur un matelas jeté par terre, voilà tout". [ibid p 602]

This second use of the phrase "la chambre au linge sale" indicates the priorities of the family, with the demands of the shop displacing human considerations; the room is not "la chambre d'Etienne".

Significantly, the room was never previously considered worth refurbishing to provide "une jolie pièce" for Etienne, whose eviction to accommodate his father confirms his lowly place in the family, relegated to the status of the shopboys in Au Bonheur des Dames, who sleep behind their counters, and of Augustine in Le Ventre de Paris. Moreover, Coupeau goes on to propose more radical, structural alterations.

"Pas vrai! il y a deux fenêtres dans la pièce. Eh bien! On en colle une par terre, on en fait une porte. Alors, comprends-tu, tu entres par la cour, nous bouchons même cette porte de communication, si ça nous plaît".

[ibid]

Coupeau's insistence on taking his wife's former lover into the family, and his ingenuity in solving problems of accommodation, indicate a profound moral collapse, reflected in the labyrinthine complexity of his proposals. The intention to block up a door anticipates the division of the Hôtel d'Orviedo by such a door in L'Argent, and the concomitant plan to pierce a door into the yard recalls the already menacing existence of such a door into the main bedroom. Coupeau's plans ought to ensure the

division of Lantier's quarters from those of the other members of the group, but, "au dernier moment, on s'était décidé à ne pas condamner la porte de communication" [ibid p 607], so that he remains as an infiltrator into the family circle. Moreover, the changes which are in fact carried out involve irrecoverable expenditure, "une centaine de francs" to the workmen, and "cent trente francs" for new furniture [ibid p 603]. The room is partly furnished, however, by further compromises and subterfuges within the household.

"Gervaise y laissa l'armoire de maman Coupeau; elle ajouta une table et deux chaises, prises dans sa propre chambre."
[ibid]

We note that the initiative has passed from Coupeau to Gervaise, the ultimate victim of the new arrangement. She it is who has to find alternative storage places for dirty linen. This feature of her trade, already used as a symbol of moral decline in earlier scenes (notably when Gervaise consents to her husband's drunken embrace whilst herself affected by mephitic vapours from the soiled clothes [RM II p 506]) reduces her to subterfuges, "à fourrer le linge un peu partout, dans les coins, principalement sous son lit, ce qui manquait d'agrément pendant les nuits d'été" [ibid p 607]. The soiling symbolised by the linen has finally invaded her private domain.

Gervaise has already shown skill in manipulating her living space, and finds in the preparations for her feast the supreme challenge, since the workroom must become a dining-room.

"Elle se décida à mettre le couvert dans la boutique; et encore, dès le matin, mesura-t-elle avec un mètre, pour savoir dans quel sens elle placerait la table. Ensuite, il fallut déménager le linge, démonter l'établi".
[ibid p 562]

Gervaise's repeated shifting of the dirty linen has elements of surreal comedy, alternating between hiding it in the flat and displaying it in

the shop. In this instance, the "overt" washing has to become "secret", as is shown immediately when Gervaise lies to fob off a customer [ibid]. A series of compromises surrounds the linen, indicative of ever-growing moral failings. Gervaise's failure to resist her husband's unexpected invitation to Lantier marks the degeneration, not only of her party, but of her life. The end of the festivities is marked by further compromises and subterfuges, as Mme Lerat demands a bed for the night;

"on enleva du lit un matelas qu'on étendit pour elle dans un coin de la boutique, après avoir poussé la table. Elle dormit là, au milieu des miettes du dîner".

[ibid p 595]

Such a slide from the meticulous measuring-up of the initial plans, to the makeshift and squalid sleeping arrangement may be seen as emblematic of the whole episode, and of its value as a symbol of Gervaise's life, a further comment by Zola on the debilitating effects of gratification.

A similar transformation of a room for the purpose of entertainment occurs in several other novels, most notably in Nana, where the radical change in Sabine Muffat's salon has already been analysed. In the same novel, Chapter IV is devoted to Nana's house-warming party. Her decision to "faire venir le restaurant chez elle" sets problems of accommodation.

"Comme la salle à manger était trop petite, le maître d'hôtel avait dressé la table dans le salon, une table où tenaient vingt-cinq couverts, un peu serrés".

[RM II p 1165]

The resultant shambles in other rooms provides one of Zola's first pictures of Nana's improvisatory life-style.

"Le cabinet se trouvait encombré des meubles du salon, qu'on avait dû rouler là, un tas de guéridons, de canapés, de fauteuils, les pieds en l'air; et elle était prête lorsque sa jupe se prit dans une roulette et se fendit".

[ibid p 1166]

This minor contretemps results directly from the disorder and clutter imposed by Nana's own decision. It may also be seen as a symbolic comment on Nana's sexual morality; "les pieds en l'air", or the similar phrase "les quatre fers en l'air" is used by Zola to imply a sexual position, and the ripping of the skirt suggests sexual abandon. Moreover, the careful planning of the maître d'hôtel is quickly negated by the arrival of gate-crashers, causing further crowding of the "couverts un peu serrés" already noted, and by Bordenave's incapacity; "il lui fallut une seconde chaise pour sa jambe... Ça ne faisait rien, il mangerait de côté" [ibid p 1172]. Overcrowding affects comfort ("il mangeait, les bras allongés, entre les épaules de ses voisins" [ibid p 1173]) and service ("les garçons, s'oubliant, couraient sur le tapis, qui se tachait de graisse" [ibid p 1176-7]). The final glimpse of the improvised dining-room depicts its reconversion into a salon, in an image which reinforces the metaphor of the theatre so persistent throughout this novel:

"Derrière lui, les garçons enlevaient déjà le couvert [...] Ils se précipitaient, se bousculaient, faisant disparaître la table comme un décor de féerie, au coup de sifflet du maître machiniste".

[ibid p 1186]

In Nana's supper party, an echo can be found of the triumphant reception given by Pierre and Félicité Rougon at the close of La Fortune des Rougon.

"La table, pour plus de solennité, fut dressée dans le salon. L'hôtel de Provence avait fourni l'argenterie, la porcelaine, les cristaux."

[RM I p 302]

Such examples of private parties using restaurant facilities find their opposite in Clorinde's decision to use the restaurant as her campaign headquarters in Son Excellence Eugène Rougon [RM II p 299], an episode tellingly commented by Borie ⁽¹⁾, who points out that Clorinde "prend plaisir à mélanger les lieux et à ignorer les cloisons". Clorinde, however,

(1) Borie, op. cit. pp 140-41

behaves outrageously, in Zola's eyes, throughout the novel. The disruption of normal patterns constitutes one of her tactics for ensuring her fascination, though Zola also identifies the element of pure "caprice", sheer contrariness, in her actions. In many ways, Clorinde confirms Borie's contention that Zola detests the re-shaping of the domestic interior, and we note that her closest rivals, in the realms of caprice, Renée and Nana, do not actually restructure their apartments or misuse them. Renée uses the hothouse as a bedroom, Nana remains dissatisfied with the successive decorations of her room, but neither approaches Clorinde in the disturbing and seemingly irrational reordering of life.

How then should the reader view Borie's claim to detect Zola's "angoisse à voir des confusions s'établir", in the light of the foregoing examples and comments? Clearly, some of the adaptations, transformations and displacements of room listed above are accompanied by major upheavals in the lives and emotions of the characters involved. Gervaise's dread of Lantier's return counterpoints Coupeau's insistence on having him as a lodger; Fouan's Lear-like flight to each of his children in turn entails a progressive dehumanisation of the space offered to him; Claude and Christine's migration from studio to studio reflects the continuing insecurity of their existence and punctuates the attrition of their love.

On the other hand, Zola seems to accept, and even to welcome, the interpenetration of different areas of the house in such novels as La Joie de Vivre and Le Docteur Pascal, in which varying degrees of dislocation occur without apparent condemnation by Zola or implied strain on the participants. Perhaps a common factor in these scenes may be detected in Zola's dislike of promiscuity, or, indeed, of mere "laissez-aller". This has been noted most often in the ballroom scenes, but also in descriptions of meals, notably those eaten in public places - for example, the restaurant at the Salon in L'Oeuvre. But even within the family circle,

Zola seems to imply that the casual misuse of rooms stands for a moral slide, either existing or potential. Thus, Zola insists that Lantier's seduction of Gervaise is provoked by the sight of Coupeau sprawled in his vomit on the conjugal bed, and is witnessed by the child Nana spying from her own "cabinet". So, from one man's abuse of an area of the home springs a dual moral turpitude, in its turn the consequence of the acceptance of an intrusion into the family's privacy. Similarly, in the smaller flat later occupied by the Coupeaus, the promiscuity imposed by the lack of privacy for Nana as she grows up leads to family tensions and, particularly, to provocative remarks from her father as she dresses: "Cache donc ta viande, que je mange mon pain!" [L'Assommoir RM II p 710]. Nor are the humble folk alone in this "laisser-aller". In Pot-Bouille, the Campardons' acceptance of Cousin Gasparine as "l'autre Mme Campardon" is accompanied by a re-allocation of the living-space. Once again, all is arranged at the instigation of the deceived partner, in this case, Rose Campardon.

"Tremblante, elle ouvrit les portes, le mena dans le salon et dans le cabinet. Un lit d'acajou [...] occupait la place de la table à dessiner, qu'on avait transportée au milieu de la pièce voisine".

[RM III p 168]

And once again, the daughter of the family witnesses, and is invited to accept, this consecration of an adulterous liaison. A similar "ménage à trois" in La Bête Humaine is accepted by the husband, though here the conjugal home is not violated; the adulterer, Séverine, uses facilities loaned initially for use by herself and her husband only, a surrogate home in Mère Victoire's flat.

A glance at the opposite pole of behaviour would tend to support this argument. As has been noted, some areas of certain houses remain sanctuaries for Zola, notably the bedrooms of devoted couples; indeed, one might argue that when Zola leads us into the bedroom of a married couple, some crisis

is bound to ensue, as occurs when François and Marthe Mouret are shown arguing in bed in La Conquête de Plassans. Amongst those devoted couples, the Huberts in Le Rêve are certainly sexually active, as Hubertine's pregnancy ultimately proves, and so, we may presume, are the Sandoz couple in L'Oeuvre and the Weiss couple in La Débâcle. Zola refrains from introducing his readers into their bedroom, though we follow Henriette Weiss into the room of Gilberte Delaherche just after that lady's lover has departed. This deliberate abstention from depicting a place of positive and wholly moral sexual activity seems remarkable. It should be noted, however, that all three couples are childless (except the Huberts at the dénouement), and that other couples whose bedrooms are in fact shown, such as the Quenus and the Mourets, are parents and partners rather than lovers. As has been pointed out by Borie, only in Le Docteur Pascal does Zola overcome his reluctance to celebrate an erotic relationship and to crown it with fertility; even here the father never sees his child.

Equally, the room of old Mme Sandoz remains inviolate by the reader's gaze, that of Mme Goujet becomes a museum tended by her son. Zola also exercises discretion in describing the rooms of several virginal girls in the novels; little or nothing is shown of the bedrooms of Flore in La Bête Humaine, Geneviève in Au Bonheur des Dames or Désirée in La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret. All three live lives unfulfilled by love, Désirée in particular being retarded in pre-adolescence. Zola does describe in detail certain rooms, notably that of Angélique, but here the description concentrates on emphasising the purity of the occupant. Equally, descriptions of the rooms of Denise and Pauline in Au Bonheur des Dames and La Joie de Vivre respectively do not detract from the virginal nature of the occupants. When attacks on their virtue are made, these occur outside their bedrooms, and are successfully repulsed; the bedroom itself cannot be blamed for inspiring lust.

Similar reticence has been noted in the evocation of certain dining-rooms and salons, though the association of these areas of the house with either moral decline or uprightness must be acknowledged to be less clear than in the case of the bedroom. The conclusion which may be drawn from Zola's decision to exclude the reader from certain décors whilst emphasising in many circumstances the instability of the domestic interior, is that the ordinary dwelling plays a part in the moral development of the novels. Simply by offering to the inhabitants, and to the bourgeoisie in particular, a framework within which to indulge fantasies, caprices and obsessions, the house manifests, through the vices of its inhabitants, those of the régime under which they live. These vices in turn reveal Zola's attitudes, not only to the régime he detested, which was already a part of history from the time of the publication of La Curée, but also to morals in general. It may be said that the house most subtly reflects Zola's moral stance in the transformations and dislocations to which he so readily submits its interior.

PRIVATE AND PUBLIC: the domestic interior and the outside world

In most cultures, the domestic interior represents the intimacy of the family, and, within that family, sub-division of the house into rooms or spheres of influence implies the right of the individual to some degree of privacy. A study of descriptive material in the novel assumes that the interior of a house (and, by extension, the grounds of that house) is relatively safe from invasion by the profane world outside, and that the members of that profane world will acknowledge this relative inviolability. Society at large may set up parallels to the domestic interior, which, being public, offer a distorted image of the family house. Thus, the restaurant or refectory, the dance-hall, the department store may be set against the family dining-room, the private ball or the salon.

However, as Borie (i) has shown, Zola's novels offer many examples of a breaching of the family's defences. The house is much less inviolate than might at first appear. Despite the preponderance of novels of bourgeois life, in which a scrupulous defence of the family's stronghold might be expected, Zola's Rougon-Macquart series abounds in references to invasion, to the collapse of prepared barriers, and to the opening-up of doors and walls from the inside. The aim of the present enquiry is to redefine the inviolability of the house, and the sanctity of areas within the house.

The apparently casual assumption that the series contains a preponderance of 'bourgeois' novels, is, in fact, objectively verifiable: twelve of the novels clearly depict predominantly middle- or upper-class worlds, and several others are indeterminate (e.g. La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret). It is more difficult to effect a division between novels which are largely 'private' in their setting, and those where the 'public' element dominates. A 'private' novel might be defined as one whose action occurs largely in a closed area, away from the intruding gaze of outsiders. Such works as (i) Borie, op.cit., ch. iv 'La Maison et la rue'.

La Conquête de Plassans, Une Page d'Amour, or even Pot-Bouille (though the latter with serious reservations, as will be shown) may be said to be 'private' and even La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret takes place behind the walls of Le Paradou or in the abbé's presbytery. Indeed, the breaching of the wall of the park by the avenging but voyeuristic Frère Archangais has the feel of the sudden opening of a bedroom door. Other novels, of which Le Ventre de Paris is a good example, seem to divide their action between a 'private' world (that of the Quenu family home, and a 'public' area (the world of the markets). In this novel, a sense of the invasion of privacy occurs as Lisa breaches the sanctuary of Florent's room, to discover that he has transformed it into a revolutionary's den. Though the room forms a part of Lisa's own home, the reader feels her intrusion to be shocking and wrong.

Other novels take place largely in public. Interestingly, some of the 'bourgeois' novels fall into this category, notably La Curée. The action of this novel unfolds in the crowded salons, dining-rooms and ballrooms of a promiscuous high society world. Only Renée's bedroom offers a degree of privacy, constantly threatened with invasion by Saccard. The counterweight to the Hotel Saccard, the Hotel Béraud, functions chiefly as a control, showing the reader what true bourgeois probity entails. The most intimate scene of the novel, set in the "cabinet particulier" of the Café Riche, significantly depicts the room as invaded by the miasma of the boulevard outside. Son Excellence Eugène Rougon, to quote another example, contains very few scenes of privacy. Rougon's life is played out in public, his time is continually eaten away by supplications from his circle of intimates and hangers-on; his career intersects a career of intrigue in the person of Clorinde, with the result that the plot allows little scope for withdrawal into "tête-à-têtes". Zola emphasises this by rigorously excluding any evocation of Rougon's private apartments representative of his personal life.

Extreme examples of the 'public' novels occur in Nana, where the early scenes in the theatre set the tone, and episodes of truly private activity are rare - the 'idylls' with Georges and Fontan, for example; and La Débâcle the most truly 'public' of plots, since the promiscuity of army life banishes any notion of privacy.

Une Page d'Amour has already been cited as an example of a 'private' novel; but this statement deserves to be qualified insofar as the 'private' world of Hélène Grandjean is deliberately contrasted with the 'public', highly social life of Juliette Deberle. A further modification to the concept of the 'private' novel will become evident, when such novels as La Conquête de Plassans, Pot-Bouille and L'Argent are re-examined for further evidence of Zola's attitudes. These novels seem to afford little help in evaluating Zola's use of descriptive material since, somewhat untypically, they contain no lengthy evocations of rooms; however, they are unexpectedly prominent in a consideration of the struggle between the wish to preserve privacy and the urge to destroy it.

In respect of the breakdown of privacy, the populiste novels of Zola's Rougon-Macquart series might be expected to afford frequent and plausible examples, which belong as much to the purely documentary field as to a wider view of Zola's preoccupations. The working-class homes in Germinal, in L'Assommoir and in La Terre lie open to invasion both from without and from within. As has earlier been demonstrated, the family circle itself affords little privacy. Adolescent daughters such as Nana have to carry out their toilet before their family's eyes, sleep with a door open to the parental bedroom, and, in the case of Catherine in Germinal, accept the presence of adult brothers or a lodger as they dress, or, as with Françoise in La Terre, sexual harassment from a brother-in-law. Equally, the house is open to all comers. For the middle-classes, the salon serves as a safety-valve or "sas", allowing the outsider an acceptable degree of intimacy whilst maintaining the inviolability of the private

apartments. This refinement does not exist for working-class families, for whom any intrusion pierces to the heart of the domestic interior. Thus, for Gervaise in L'Assommoir, the birth of Nana forms the occasion of a series of breaches of her privacy, as Allard points out in L'Assommoir: le chiffre du texte. The midwife, Coupeau's relatives, Mme Boche, find Gervaise at her most vulnerable, and her distress is evident:

"Ça la mettait hors d'elle de voir une étrangère s'installer dans sa chambre, ouvrir ses tiroirs, toucher ses affaires".
[RM II, p 472]

Similar intrusions, not resented by the family, accompany the last hours of Mouche in La Terre [RM IV pp 455-8]. Here it is rather the neglect of the corpse when a hailstorm flattens crops that underlines the basic indifference of outsiders to a private disaster, despite their intrusive activity.

In Germinal, Maheude does not dispute Mme Hennebeau's right as wife of the mine manager to intrude into the cottages of the workers; Zola shows, however, that the bourgeoisie sees herself as a "montreur de bêtes" [RM III, p 1223]. A similar invasion takes over Misard's house in La Bête Humaine, when the snowbound passengers take advantage of an invitation extended initially to the family's acquaintance, Séverine: "une vingtaine encombrant la pièce" [RM IV, p 1178+]. Phasie's room remains accessible only to Séverine and Jacques, acceptable intruders, but the dying Phasie can see the other passengers through the door of her room, and reflects on their indifference to her state:

"Dire que, là-dedans, parmi ces gens pressés de courir à leurs affaires, pas un ne se doutait de la chose, de cette saleté qu'on lui avait mise dans son sel".

[RM IV p 1183]

Whilst recognising that this episode forms a part of the larger theme of society and the individual within the novel, it constitutes a striking and concrete example of the weak defences of the working-man's home in Zola's

novels. Other instances are afforded by *Mère Fétu* in Une Page d'Amour and *Mère Eulalie* in L'Argent. In contrast, the Lorilleux couple in L'Assommoir consider their home to be a fortress, and all visitors as potential thieves.

The 'open' equivalent of the home is, we have seen, the public place in which normal private events occur. Zola's novels document the rise of the mass culture, as the "Bonheur des Dames" supplants the "Vieil Elbeuf", as the dance halls propose a counterpart to the society ball, and the public is free to acclaim or ridicule the paintings at exhibitions. Zola's reaction to many of these modern phenomena is one of mistrust. His acceptance of the ultimate benefits of the department store comes only after a full exploration of the suffering it causes to the individual, whether employee or competitor, and of the repercussions of the store's temptations on the lives of its clientele. Superficially, the conflict can be seen as lying between the new, 'open' department store and the old 'closed' family shop, of which Baudu and Bourras own examples, deemed to be typical. Yet, within each structure lie elements of its opposite. Baudu's shop is opposite the big store, from which Clara watches Colomban watching her. Bourras's shop houses rooms to let, which, as Denise discovers, are 'open' to a kind of public, being let out mainly to prostitutes. Within the store, the divisions between the departments set up enclaves, evident in the habits and speech of their employees. The building also contains hidden areas, away from the public gaze, but revealed to the reader during Mouret's progress through them in Chapter II. Above lie the cubicles for shopgirls, each employee forbidden to open her door to the others, and in fear of sudden checks by the significantly-named supervisor, Mme Cabin.

This dichotomy between the open and the secret areas of a public building could be observed in the case of other social organisms, not all of which

fall within the compass of the present study; examples are the markets in Le Ventre de Paris and the National Assembly in Son Excellence Eugène Rougon. One such division seems, however, to demand consideration, namely the equation of theatre and brothel in Nana. Perceived by the theatre owner himself, reiterated in the course of Ch. I, this overlap encapsulates the deep confusion between 'public' and 'private', 'open' and 'closed', since both theatre and brothel are all of these. The theatre rejoins the big store, the exhibition, the dance hall as a place of public pleasure, and reminds us that they all share an element of voyeurism in the provision of that pleasure. Though the audience at the premiere of "La Blonde Venus" is a mass of people, the fantasies the sight of Nana encourages are individual, private imaginings, as Genet demonstrates in Le Balcon. The brothel enables the voyeur to play out his fantasies in 'private', within an 'open' framework, in that he must frequent a semi-public place in order to do so. Thus, Nana is simultaneously a star of the stage and an occasional performer at la Tricon's establishment. Zola seems to prefer an exploration of the more 'private' form of prostitution, the "femme entretenue", and even the sexual encounters with her many protectors go undescribed, other than the scene into which Muffat bursts, surprising his father-in-law. However, Zola's oblique presentation in Nana of a voyeuristic element provides a line of approach to a deeper consideration of the issues raised.

The actress and the whore both parade what is normally reserved for the private circle; emotions, flesh, fantasies. They flaunt before public, client and, ultimately, reader, aspects of behaviour he would not expect to find in the public gaze, but which might well form a part of his private life. However, such flaunting occurs on numerous occasions in Zola's novels, and in a wide range of contexts, but almost always with reference to sexual behaviour among the bourgeois. Indeed, Gervaise's name-day feast seems the only example of a working-class character determined to display

private activities in full view of the public, and this in a context other than the overtly sexual. Gervaise's explicit aim is to "écraser les Lorilleux", her hated in-laws, who, in a significant phrase, "s'enfermaient [...] quand ils mangeaient un bon morceau, comme s'ils l'avaient volé" [RMII p 563]. The context suggests extremes which will merit deeper consideration at another point. For the moment, it suffices to point out that this rivalry between the two households provokes Gervaise to extravagant claims:

"Gervaise aurait mis sa table en travers de la rue, si elle avait pu, histoire d'inviter chaque passant". [ibid p 563-4]

This mention of "la rue" forms the core of the celebrated episode of the gradual widening of festivities as the meal progresses. Zola evidently equates flaunting here with happy participation and a comic effect, though such a jovial context is rare. The ball at Niort in Son Excellence Eugène Rougon comes closest to the atmosphere of gaiety found in L'Assommoir (though even here, there is a strong sexual element, and the dancing accompanies the revelation of drama).

Bourgeois characters find other ways of imposing their private obsessions. Renée, before her liaison with Maxime in La Curée, proclaims her "crânerie" and her seeking after novel sensuality, by the very trappings of her carriage, seen in the opening pages. Zola sees the vehicle as "une chaise-longue de convalescente" [RM I pp 319-20], noting the important role of the bear-skin in sustaining Renée's mood of unfocussed yearning - a skin which dominates the most explicit of her encounters with Maxime, and which also emphasises the note of "frilosité" in Renée's physical and emotional nature. Her "crânerie", the desire to shock, reaches its height in the "tableaux vivants", and more especially in the Tahitian costume she wears to the ball which follows that entertainment. Her audience consists of friends and members of her circle, but Zola shows that Renée has at last succeeded in shocking even them, though the men

are delighted.

"Elle laissait derrière elle un sillage d'habits noirs étonnés et charmés de la transparence de sa blouse de mousseline [...] "C'est de la dernière indécence, n'est-ce pas? [...] La bande des hommes graves n'était pas de cet avis". [ibid p 556]

Perhaps more interesting is the opposition established by Zola between the role of Céleste, the maid before whom the lovers do not trouble to conceal their passion, and that of Baptiste, the butler whose presence arouses feelings of guilt in Renée, but who is eventually disclosed (by Céleste!) to be a covert homosexual. The antithesis between the 'open' relationship of Céleste and Renée and the 'closed/closet' dignity of Baptiste suggests further dimensions in the play upon flaunting/hiding, natural/unnatural, moral/immoral, as the lines between the attitudes become blurred even further. Céleste is the first of a number of treacherous maids in Zola's novels, all privy to their masters' or mistresses' amours, sometimes (e.g. Lisa the Campardon's maid in Pot-Bouille) without being told. Céleste is treacherous only in her final abandonment of Renée, and seems totally unperturbed by the exchanges which she witnesses between Renée and Maxime. Renée's real sense of guilt lest Baptiste should discover her secret proves to be mutual, since he has as much to hide as she. Baptiste provides a minor theme of the novel, his complete discretion about his sexual life acting as an ironic contrast to Renée's "crânerie".

It could well be argued, that the whole of the Saccards' lifestyle consists of such "crânerie". Renée's salon, and the entire ballroom sequence constitute a parade of wealth, luxury, vice and excess. However, these examples of bourgeois flaunting lose something of their impact in that they represent a display before one's peers, whereas Renée's carriage can be seen by all who walk the streets⁽ⁱ⁾. Equally, all of Renée's circle may be judged guilty

(i) In this respect, Flaubert in Madame Bovary adds an element of flaunting as he notes the faces of the peasants pressed against the windows during the ball at the Château.

of similar excesses. However, Zola is at pains to point out that Renée aims to be a leader of taste and fashion, and that her conduct is always outré. Thus, her salon is unusual in its colour scheme, her bedroom is a pure fantasy, admired and even envied by her social equals.

"On disait: 'Le cabinet de toilette de la belle Madame Saccard,'
comme on dit 'La galerie des glaces, à Versailles'."

[ibid p 478]

Despite this hermetic, ingrown quality, the world of La Curée nevertheless affords a useful clue to our appreciation of the other salons of the bourgeoisie which act as buffers between the private world of the family and the public world outside. In particular, the salon as indicator of the fortunes of the Rougons in the first novel of the series, and of the sloughing-off of moral restraints by the Muffats in Nana, has already been considered. To these must be added Juliette Deberle's salon in Une Page d'Amour, a paler version of Renée's in its openness and its reflection of the mistress's personality.

The bedroom, not the salon, is chosen by Henriette Desforges in Au Bonheur des Dames as the place in which to flaunt her liaison with Octave Mouret. Since the only audience is Denise, the bedroom, more intimate than the salon, adds weight to the unspoken but implicit challenge to the younger woman. Zola's manipulation of the scene, analysed elsewhere, conveys a strong sense of outrage, of overstepping the bounds, despite the absence of a truly 'public' invasion of Henriette's privacy. (i)

(i) In the broader context of the notion of 'public' and 'private', one could maintain that the whole of Au Bonheur des Dames exemplifies the dangers of display. The promiscuity of the store, for both customers and staff, is heightened by frequent references to, and lists of, voyeuristic goods on display (e.g. underclothes RM III pp 780-1), by the sexual undertones of such episodes as Mignot's fitting of gloves on to the customers' hands [ibid p 484]; and by incidents such as the invasion of the ladies' changing room by a husband [ibid p 780] or the stripping of Mme de Bovestofind stolen goods [ibid p 793].

As the series of novels reaches its close, Zola at last lifts the cloud of disapproval from the flaunting of passion. Pascal and Clotilde earn no condemnation from the author for their uninhibited display of their love. Several lyrical passages treat the theme of King David and Abishag largely in an outdoor setting, but the first scene of their pride in their love occurs indoors, at La Souléfiade, with the old servant Martine as audience. Her reaction of shock and tears springs from her own undeclared passion for Pascal, but equally Zola invites us to view her revulsion as a failure to recognise what is no longer flaunting but justified pride, a sexuality at last able to emerge from the shadow of condemnation ⁽¹⁾. Like many of Zola's attitudes, his disapproval of overt sexuality underwent a profound modification; he no longer condemns, at least, not when it no longer suits him to do so.

The scene of Pascal and Clotilde's display of their love shifts from the house to the open street, and this too reveals a shift in attitudes in this final novel. Returning after a long absence to a Provençal setting (not used since La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret), Zola insists to a remarkable degree on the house as a closed and (literally) shuttered space. The "volets soigneusement clos" feature in the opening sentence of Le Docteur Pascal [RM V p 917], thereby introducing a theme which gathers strength as the plot unfolds. Few other works in the series carry any similar insistence; indeed, several novels make a feature of the openness or at least the transparency of windows, notably in L'Assommoir, Une Page d'Amour and Au Bonheur des Dames, as well as Chapter 1 of La Bête Humaine. Amongst the novels set in and around Plassans, only La Conquête de Plassans could be said to have so 'closed' a setting. What

(1) The relationship with Jeanne Rozerot undoubtedly precipitates the sexual liberation of both Zola and his characters, all the more interesting if contrasted with La Bête Humaine, the composition of which accompanied the beginnings of Zola's liaison. Here, an illicit affair is conducted in closed, secretive surroundings, and Mère Victoire's flat, so open in Chapter 1, is revealed in Chapter VIII as trebly isolated, by closed apertures, night and thick snow.

is new in Le Docteur Pascal is Zola's insistence on the closing of shutters, on the sequestration of one or both of the chief characters, alongside such images as Tante Dide's room in the asylum (admittedly also a setting of La Conquête de Plassans), and Maxime "barricadé dans son hôtel" [ibid p 1136]. The clue to this new vision of the Provençal house lies perhaps in that same opening sentence, which implies that the sun is an intruder, despite the name of the house: la Souléiade = domaine du soleil.

"Dans la chaleur ardente de l'après-midi de juillet, la salle, aux volets soigneusement clos, était pleine d'un grand calme"

[ibid p 917]

Zola goes on to speak of "de minces flèches de lumière" which penetrate the shutters, and of "le coup de soleil qui incendiait la façade" [ibid]. The searing summer sun of Provence logically justifies the use of shutters (though they are absent from the three earlier Provençal novels), but suspicion grows that Zola intends more than a literal truth. Pascal must frequently defend his life's work against uncomprehending intruders - Félicité, Martine, Clotilde herself at one point - and Clotilde fends off a projected marriage to Dr. Ramond. The house, with its key points of study and bedroom, must be defended, to the extent that Pascal ceases to see patients in his home [ibid p 939]. Intruders will take liberties - Félicité, in Ch. I, opens the closed shutters depicted in the opening sentence [ibid p 924]. Yet the sun can also be seen as a symbol of life, of love even: Zola seems to imply that Pascal and Clotilde are not yet ready to receive the beneficial intruder. By p 950, the shutters are again closed, and Clotilde's own intrusion into Pascal's private papers takes place in darkness, though with the shutters open; an invasion of privacy without the benefit of clarifying light or of heart-warming heat.

As the love grows between them, as yet unacknowledged, Pascal and Clotilde each seek reclusion voluntarily. Pascal, while convalescent, "[fait] clore à demi les volets" [ibid p 1043], and repels all visitors after intrusions by Félicité and Ramond. During the early days of their love, the couple "pendant un grand mois [...] s'enfermèrent" [ibid p 1068], before their decision to display their love to the world. During this period, we are told that the two are in privacy, following a decision "de tout barricader et d'emporter leur dîner, en haut, dans la chambre" [ibid p 1127]. Since they are alone except for Martine, this act does not have the same degree of selfishness as is implied by Gervaise's condemnation of the Lorilleux couple, noted earlier, or, indeed, by Maheude's reflections in Germinal [RM III p 1360] on Pierronne's secrecy in eating rabbit whilst others starve. But whereas a private feast was condemned in earlier works as petty, ungenerous and secretive (Pierronne locks her stepchild in the cellar whilst she and her lover feast), Zola's view seems to have undergone revision. In Le Docteur Pascal, the seclusion has become the sharing, both justified and right, of an essentially private, ritualistic moment. Even the love that dares to proclaim itself needs such "moments privilégiés".

After Clotilde's departure, Pascal "s'enferma au fond de la grande maison vide" [RM V p 1155], now under attack from another quarter - the Mistral [RM V pp 1147, 1149]. The contrast with the life-giving sun needs no underlining; this wind acts as harbinger of death. Only at the close of the novel, as Clotilde gazes through unshuttered windows at the open landscape is the final triumph of the sun over the closed house ensured.

As has been observed, the notion of the house under attack contains contradictory elements. The closed house suggests an intimate and private world, which ~~must~~ inevitably come under attack, since it offers a challenge. In the case of Le Docteur Pascal, this attack may be either destructive (e.g. Félicité's ultimate destruction of Pascal's papers) or productive (e.g. the invasion by the sun), and both may be

suggested in a single gesture, as Félicité opens the shutters. In earlier novels however, such intrusions into privacy earn Zola's disapproval, even as he engineers his plots so as to contrive them. If Borie is correct in equating the closed, stifling interior with anality and repression, Zola's urge to depict such interiors as succumbing to threat presumably indicates the author's ultimate rejection of this repression in himself.

To expose a private room to uninvited gaze implies the presence of a watcher, a theme treated in Philip Walker's study. "The mirror, the window and the eye in Zola's fiction" (1). More intimate than the view through the window, however, is the gaze which penetrates deep into the house, invading areas normally jealously guarded. Occasionally, this penetration may be actively desired, as has been seen when Henriette Desforges forces Denise to recognise Octave's status as lover by bringing them both into her bedroom. Usually, however, the sudden breaching of closed areas appears as an outrage, and the gaze often that of a voyeur.

As so often, La Curée offers incidents which act as paradigms for situations yet to come. Thus, the role of Céleste, Renee's maid, finds a male counterpart within the same novel in the personage of Charles, the waiter at the Café Riche, whose attentions embarrass Renée. His evident familiarity with Maxime, his proffering of a comb after Renée's seduction imply a knowingness, a perception of what must have taken place, which Renée senses as a delight in her fall:

"[Renée] apercut Charles, qui regardait autour de lui, flairant. Il finit par apercevoir le ruban bleu de Renée, froissé, oublié sur un coin du divan. Et il s'empressa de le lui apporter, de son air poli. Alors elle sentit toute sa honte".

[RM I p 458]

The role of Pascal's servant Martine in the breaching of the defences of her master's house has already been noted, and her collaboration with

(1) In Yale French Studies 42, 1969, pp 52-67.

Félicité leads to the destruction of Pascal's life's work. The clearest and most sensational example of this betrayal by a servant occurs as Clarisse leads Delcambre to surprise his mistress baroness Sandorff in a highly perverse sexual act with Saccard, in L'Argent [RM V p 210] .

Here Zola adds the complication that the betrayal takes place in Delcambre's own flat, and the means of approaching the guilty couple, (through

"cette porte condamnée, oubliée, on pouvait maintenant pénétrer sans bruit dans le cabinet de toilette, qui lui-même n'était séparé de la chambre que par une portière"

[ibid])

adds to Delcambre's sense of embarrassment as he waits in Clarisse's room. Zola contrives to imply that Delcambre is at fault, and that his reliance on a venal servant places him squarely in the wrong. The penetration of a lovers' rendez-vous via a "porte condamnée" carries as much, if not more, condemnation than the act (merely suggested) which Delcambre witnesses.

The would-be voyeur is sometimes disappointed. Thus, Renée's incognito visit to Blanche Muller's party in La Curée does not satisfy her expectation of undreamed-of vice. Arguably, Blanche as a "cocotte" has no claim to privacy, as will be the case with Nana. Nevertheless, Renée's visit represents an intrusion because it involves deception, and similar situations occur in later novels. Lisa's first spying visit to Florent's room [Le Ventre de Paris RM I p 769-7], Mouret's scrutiny of Abbe Faujas's room through the keyhole [La Conquête de Plassans RM I p 1197], and possibly the invasions of Malignon's love-nest for Juliette in Une Page d'Amour, by, successively, Hélène and Dr. Deberle.

Zola contrives interesting variations on this theme of the intruder. We may note his complacent invention of a series of near-voyeuristic incursions into privacy in order to create near-simultaneous climaxes to different threads of plot. Thus, a character, who may in himself be above suspicion of seeking sensations, is despatched by Zola to a number of private houses, at which he encounters crises. So, Jean Macquart in La Terre, Part V Ch. V, is successively driven from his own marital home, to la Borderie, where he finds that the owner has just been killed, then proceeds to the house of the Charles family, in which he witnesses the comic episode of Elodie's engagement, before returning to his point of departure. In L'Argent, Mme Caroline acts as Zola's eye-witness in Chapters XI and XII. After contriving the resolution of a number of sub-plots by having characters come to see Mme Caroline in Ch. XI, Zola sends her out just in time to discover Mazaud's suicide. In Ch. XII, the excursions are spread over a period of several months, during which, Mme Caroline visits successively the Hôtel d'Orviedo as the Princesse prepares to retire to a convent; the Beauvilliers ladies, as Alice, recently raped, obliges her mother to yield the last family jewels to Busch; Maxime Saccard's mansion, where she finds him on the point of leaving Paris. Subsequently, she visits two institutions, the orphanage "L'Oeuvre du Travail", and the Conciergerie prison, before, some weeks later, being present at Sigismond Busch's deathbed in his room overlooking the Bourse. If the sceptical reader or the purist critic jibs at such manipulation by Zola, it might be maintained that the novelist's increasing preoccupation with catastrophe in these later novels justifies this device, and that the very embarrassment felt by Jean and by Madame Caroline as they intrude on private grief or joy must communicate to the reader a sense of collapsing values, even in so comic a scene as that of Elodie's engagement, with its strong sense of bourgeois hypocrisy.

A further variant on voyeuristic intrusion of private space concerns the involuntary glimpse afforded by the open door, and here, out of many examples, it is Pot-Bouille which provides a particularly rich vein which merits closer study. One of the curious features of Les Rougon-Macquart lies in the uneven distribution of descriptive material. Some novels, such as La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret, contain little material for the present study, since the settings include few domestic interiors, but provide ample scope for other descriptions. However, there remains a small group of novels largely domestic in scale, which offer few opportunities for comment, so rare or fragmentary are the descriptions. These include La Conquête de Plassans, Pot-Bouille, La Joie de Vivre and Le Rêve. In three of these, the domestic setting is largely confined to one home - and even this forms a small part of the descriptive material found in these novels - but the case of Pot-Bouille, with its multiple occupancy setting, a range of flats and servants' quarters, remains something of a mystery, since the only areas subjected to any detailed evocation are the Duveyrier's party in their apartment and the wedding ball at the Hôtel du Louvre. Perhaps, the secrecy of the bourgeois occupants partly explains their reluctance to admit the outsider, though Octave penetrates easily enough; however, little is revealed by the novelist about such homes as these of Théodore and Valérie Vabre, or of Mme. Juzeur. Much play is made, instead, with the glimpse. Doors which ought to be closed remain indiscreetly open. The privacy seems to invite violation, and, on a sexual level, Octave is willing to oblige, though not always successful.

A further element suggested by the half-open door is the stage farce à la Feydeau, which the plot of Pot-Bouille resembles - one is reminded of Nana's maid, Zoé, at her wits' end to cope with a flow of callers and placing them in improbable cubby-holes. Zola, in Pot-Bouille, makes great play with the possibility of comic surprises and mistakes.

Initially, the glimpses are provided by the introductory tour given by Campardon to the newly-arrived Octave. The latter, approaching his own flat in the wake of Campardon:

"aperçut par une porte entr'ouverte, une jeune femme debout devant un berceau [...] la jeune femme, tout d'un coup rougissante, poussa la porte de l'air honteux d'une personne surprise"

[RM III p 7]

Marie Pinchon's reaction implies an awareness that her privacy has been attacked; but it was she who left the door open. At various points in Pot-Bouille, the division between the unwitting intruder and the inviting occupant creates a comic tension, though it must be allowed that Zola does not, in general, provide a description of the room itself.

Thus, the Pinchons' flat, bisected by a corridor, encourages its occupants to leave doors open, but Marie "poussait la porte, très réservée, presque sauvage", whenever Octave approached [ibid p 60]. However, it is she who prompts her husband to invite Octave, when "Octave sortait, le dimanche suivant [et] aperçut toute la famille en train de prendre le café" [ibid p 63]. This intrusion is followed by Octave's seduction of Marie on the kitchen table. Zola notes: "La porte n'avait même pas été fermée" [ibid p 76].

Octave is again drawn into a private scene when called in by Valérie's maid to help in her mistress's "crise de nerfs". The bedroom in which this occurs warrants no description in Zola's view, but he focuses our attention on the erotic potential of the defenceless woman ("La bonne l'avait délacée, sa gorge sortait de son corset ouvert" ibid p 73) before the predatory male. In the event, nothing transpires, but the reader recalls this incident when Valérie throws a more spectacular and public fit during the wedding celebrations. This time, the intruder is Campardon,

who "dut se permettre d'entrouvrir la porte et de passer la tête" [ibid p 155]. He sees Valérie, "dont la gorge tendue, secouée de spasmes, avait jailli hors du corsage dégrafé" [ibid]. The element of voyeurism, albeit comic, emerges very strongly.

Other examples concern Octave's surprising of Campardon and Gasparine [ibid p 177], the "porte entrebâillée" of the cook Julie, in whose room Octave finds Trublot [ibid p 101], and Trublot showing Octave the furtive embraces of Clarisse, Duveyrier's mistress, "derrière une porte, pendue au cou d'un gaillard" [ibid pp 135-6].

Principally, however, the anonymous "monsieur distingué" provides the focal point for the theme of voyeurism which, evidently, runs through Pot-Bouille. The air of respectability which Gourd, the concierge, seeks to cast over the man's activities in the apartment he only occasionally occupies, cannot be sustained when glimpses of the room indicate debauchery. "Distingué" or not, he patently uses the flat for immoral purposes, but Zola leaves to the reader the task of imagining exactly what occurs. There are no hints as to the man's character, occupation or tastes, with the result that the reader is forced into the role of voyeur, much as Hitchcock manoeuvres the audiences of his films into the same role. Zola starts from the premiss that the door of the flat offers no clue, "elle restait toujours close, comme barrée d'un silence de tombe" [ibid p 108], but Octave catches a glimpse of the interior of the flat as a veiled woman emerges. Octave "cherchait du regard le bureau du monsieur et découvrait à la place l'angle d'un grand lit" [ibid]. None of this should excite the reader, but Zola ensures that it does. The ironic tone of the novel has been sufficiently well-established for the reader to expect a sordid revelation behind the respectable façade. A later glimpse affords more details:

"un grand lit aux draps arrachés, une armoire à glace vide, où l'on apercevait un reste de homard et des bouteilles entamées, deux cuvettes sales traînant, l'une devant le lit, l'autre sur une chaise".

[ibid p 252]

An evidently bacchanalian scene; as has already been noted, the "cuvettes traînant" are associated for Zola with sloppy personal habits but also with post-coital ablutions. However, nothing specific can be affirmed to corroborate the inference of a scene of debauchery: Zola has proved his point, that the casually glimpsed scene may be an adequate substitute for the detailed description, in evocative power at least. On one level, the tranquil presence of Gourd, tidying up and leaving the door open assures us that there is nothing to hide; on the other hand, the whole tone of Pot-Bouille invites us to read into every detail, including the concierge's complaisance, a paradigm of bourgeois hypocrisy⁽¹⁾.

The above examples of the invasion of privacy centre upon the irruption of one person's gaze into a scene normally hidden away behind closed doors. At the other end of the spectrum of voyeuristic encroachment stands the house or room which has been truly opened up to the casual gaze, in some cases literally. Metaphorical 'openings' exist

(1) We may contrast with this Gourd's diatribes against the novelist residing in the apartments with his young family, an idealised Zola, keeping himself aloof, seen only as his closed (private?) carriage emerges from the yard, but guilty, in the eyes of the respectable, of publishing scandalous revelations about society. Here Gourd evidently exemplifies hypocrisy, but the irony only becomes fully valid if we accept that his sycophancy towards the 'monsieur distingué' is also hypocritical.

also, as when the populace of Niort participates in the gaieties of the ball at the Préfecture in Son Excellence Eugène Rougon, already quoted more than once, but the most striking instances of the 'open' room concern the room (or house) as it reveals its interior as it dies. Once again, La Curée shows the way; Haussmann's demolitions enable the reader, through the intermediary of a group of business associates of Saccard, to be present as houses stand exposed to the public gaze.

Zola's first evocation of the scene contains elements of sentiment which might recall Murger's Scènes de la Vie de Bohême in their exploitation of the pathos of the "hautes bâtisses éventrées, montrant leurs entrailles" [RM I p 581]. "Rien n'était plus lamentable de pauvres petits cabinets où toute l'existence d'un homme avait peut-être tenu Une girouette oubliée grinçait au bord d'une toiture" [ibid]. This quality of the scene intensifies as a colleague of Saccard identifies his own former lodging.

"L'émotion prenait l'ancien ouvrier.
'J'y ai passé cinq ans, murmura-t-il. Ça n'allait pas fort dans ce temps-là, mais, c'est égal, J'étais jeune Vous voyez bien l'armoire; c'est là que j'ai économisé trois cents francs, sou à sou [.....] Je me souviens encore d'une repasseuse de la maison d'en face Voyez-vous, le lit était à droite, près de la fenêtre Ah! ma pauvre chambre, comme ils me l'ont arrangée!

[ibid p 584]

Besides offering an early hint of the ambiguity of Zola's attitudes to the modernisation of France under the Second Empire, this passage is striking for the deflating nature of the response it evokes from Saccard.

"Allez donc, dit Saccard, ce n'est pas un mal qu'on jette ces vieilles cambuses-là par terre. On va bâtir à la place de belles maisons de pierres de taille... Est-ce que vous habiteriez encore un pareil taudis?"

[ibid]

Besides the violation of the house, a second intrusion has occurred - the rough response to the emotion which the first speaker has allowed to be glimpsed. The revelation of tender feelings elicits no sympathy from the hearers.

Already in La Curée, the planned and, in some ways, welcome destruction of houses is compared by Zola to "une brèche que le canon aurait ouverte" [ibid p 581]. Violence accompanies the destruction of the Mouret house in La Conquête de Plassans, but most worthy of note is the prolongation of the detached, indifferent attitude already noted in La Curée. Zola provides an almost stendhalian distancing from the obviously sensational elements of the episode. After describing, in Ch. XXII, Mouret's preparation and execution of his act of arson, and a melodramatic multiple death scene, Ch. XXIII returns to the beginnings of the fire, seen now from the outside by a gathering of prominent townsfolk, and which develops into a social event. As their neighbour's house blazes, they exchange personal and political small-talk. Curious rather than anxious about possible victims, they are concerned chiefly for their own property (not merely houses - Mme. Rastoil's anxiety is for her watch), and they care more about the prestige of the fire brigade than about the possibility of a crime. The purpose here is evidently satirical. When Mouret is suggested as the perpetrator of the fire, Zola notes:

"La maison en flammes devenait beaucoup plus intéressante depuis que la société connaissait la main qui avait mis le feu".

[RM I p 1210]

In contrast with the exposed attic in La Curée, the Mouret house inspires no emotion, and only casual interest, as a spectator points out "à gauche, un lit qui brûle. Les rideaux sont jaunes, ils flambent comme du papier" [ibid p 1209]. It is difficult to see in these details any profound comment. Sexual transgressions ("le lit") have not caused the family's downfall, nor have the prosperous Mourets been jealous ("les rideaux jaunes"), both interpretations to be found elsewhere in Zola's novels.

In a novel remarkable for the paucity of descriptive passages, Zola's reticence in evoking a spectacle does not surprise us. The reader is left to supply from his imagination and from Ch. XXII the details of the holocaust seen by the neighbours, and in particular, the views afforded of the interior of the blazing house.

Mouret's credo, stated earlier in the novel, is an affirmation of the "private" life.

"Nous restons chez nous, nous autres, nous ne recevons personne. Notre jardin est un paradis fermé, où je défie bien le diable de venir nous tenter."

[ibid p 932]

The invasion and soiling of this paradise, the nemesis of Mouret's hubris, forms the kernel of La Conquête de Plassans, culminating in the blaze which turns the private house into the public spectacle, but one which provokes curiously little reaction from the bystanders.

War brings the ultimate violation of privacy. The promiscuity of army life, the dislocation of many normal activities such as sleeping and eating, provide a framework within which Zola's frequent mention of houses opened to all comers by the fortunes of war seems merely another mani-

festation of a complete upheaval in the social order, in La Débâcle. Zola establishes this theme early in the novel, describing the homes abandoned by refugees.

"Certains, avant le départ, fermaient tout, les maisons semblaient mortes, portes et fenêtres closes, tandis que le plus grand nombre [...] laissaient les vieilles demeures ouvertes, les fenêtres et les portes béantes sur le vide des pièces démenagées."

[RM V p 432]

The contrast between the two reactions of the populace, between closure and breaching, further illustrates the polarisation already explored. No doubt Zola is, to some degree, merely recording in a documentary way, what observers actually saw. Nonetheless, the fact that he chooses to include this detail confirms his fascination with the tightly-closed house, which seems dead (like, for example, the flat of the "monsieur distingué" in Pot-Bouille), and the ever-open, inviting door, which flaunts the contents of the room or house. In this case, however, the rooms have been stripped. Once more, the duality proposed by Borie between anality, secretiveness, and openness associated with excretion becomes apposite, if we recall that, in French as in English, the word "évacuation" would be applicable to these houses and "le vide des pièces démenagées".

The war brings a further possible development of intrusion; looting. Silvine describes the houses thus treated:

"Les maisons n'avaient plus de portes, elles bâillaient sur la rue par toutes les ouvertures du rez-de-chaussée, et l'on apercevait les débris des meubles à l'intérieur, un vrai massacre qui mettait en colère les gens calmes".

[ibid p 538]

Silvine reports the reaction of the populace: "les gens calmes", no longer indifferent, can be judged to have sensed the outrage of looting as a form of rape of the house. She does not specify the sort of people they are, but indicates that the destruction of furniture sparks off their anger. Bourgeois or possessive peasants, either class might attract Zola's irony in other circumstances for their concern with material possessions; here,

however, the reader's reaction is surely intended to be in line with that of these "gens calmes". Zola's choice of words such "elles bâillaient", "un vrai massacre", contributes to the feeling of justified anger, as house and furniture become to some extent humanised. "Bâiller" also suggests involuntary expulsion from the body, and continues the theme of private functions performed in public. It is a word which will be encountered in other episodes, and which Zola evidently associates with the outrage inflicted by war; the normally discreet doors and windows display what they should be hiding.

The hazards of war produce random, almost surreal examples of the invasion of private life; striking instances of this are the direct hit on Weiss's house which kills his housekeeper but leaves her sick child visible in bed inside the house [ibid p 576], and, even more so, the incident in which an unknown child leads Henriette through alleys and gardens on her way to Bazeilles, taking her, at one point, through "une maison basse de jardinier".

"Il poussa une porte, se trouva dans une chambre, passa dans une autre, où il y avait une vieille femme, la seule âme restée là, sans doute. Elle semblait hébétée, debout près d'une table [...]. Déjà, de l'autre côté, ils ressortaient dans une ruelle".
[ibid p 630]

What strikes Zola most about this episode seems to be the oneiric indifference to each other of all three.

"Elle regarda ces deux personnes inconnues passer ainsi au travers de sa maison; et elle ne leur dit pas un mot, et eux-mêmes ne lui adressèrent pas la parole". [ibid]

In La Débâcle, the sense of violation attains the pitch of intensity which corresponds to a clinical state of shock, seen in a milder form in such irruptions as Delcambre's intrusion on Saccard and the Baroness in L'Argent, in Muffat's reaction to the sight of Nana in bed with his father-in-law in Nana, or Lisa's discovery of Florent's

"révolutionnée" bedroom. La Débâcle, indeed, can be said to operate best on this level, as those aspects of the work which excited Zola's contemporaries (the documentary realism and the analysis of national failure) recede into the tradition of the war novel.

Of prime importance among these dream-like episodes of the 'private' brutally made 'public' is the incident centring on Dubreuil's house, as the Prussians remove his salon furniture into the garden:

"les portes et les fenêtres du rez-de-chaussée avaient dû être enfoncées à coups de crosse, les ouvertures baillaient sur des pièces mises à sac, tandis que des meubles, jetés dehors, gisaient sur le gravier de la terrasse, au bas du perron. Il y avait surtout là tout un meuble de salon bleu ciel, le canapé et les douze fauteuils, rangés au petit bonheur, pêle-mêle, autour d'un grand guéridon, dont le marbre blanc s'était fendu".

[ibid p 699]

This variation on the ruined interior shows the house turned inside out. To do this, violence has been necessary ("enfoncées à coups de crosse"), evidence that this was a 'retaining' rather than an 'evacuating' situation. However, the reader of the Rougon-Macquart will recall in this scene such earlier confusions between interior and exterior as the 'civilised' Parc Monceau seen from the 'wild' conservatory in La Curée; the "salon en plein air" as Mouret's house burns in La Conquête de Plassans; and Juliette Deberle's displacement of her salon to her garden in Une Page d'Amour. Zola proceeds to build upon the surrealistic effect already noted in La Débâcle, since he returns several times to this scene. Firstly, he depicts a running battle "autour du canapé et des fauteuils bleu ciel" [ibid p 703], civilised witnesses to a particularly savage and primitive hand-to-hand fight. Here, if not earlier, the choice of colour suggestive of heavenly spheres and of light, conveys an ironic touch. Later, Prosper and Silvine descry "un salon étrange, que la pluie devait tremper depuis la veille" bearing apparently sleeping soldiers. They are, of course, dead, in a final dislocation of the first function of the salon furniture [ibid p 737]. A cliché perhaps in a post-rimbaldian age,

but for Zola, the dead soldiers are the culminating image of dislocation, of the misuse of an essentially private world. Outside rather than indoors, bearing dead, not living, bodies, wet from a night's rain, the "salon bleu ciel" provides a, literally, shocking culmination of Zola's theme.

In La Débâcle, the theme of the violation of privacy attains at last a tragic dimension, surpassing in its implications all previous statements of the motif, and, in this final example of the eviscerated salon, Zola transcends the detached cynicism which attends earlier manifestations of the ravished house.

CONCLUSION

The foregoing chapters have sought to establish that the description of domestic rooms is integral to the "Weltanschauung" of Zola's Rougon-Macquart novels, since, through these descriptions, it is possible to discern the principles which govern the novelist's attitudes. Rather than provide a summary of the arguments presented, it is proposed that this conclusion should highlight the points which appear to be novel, and those which open doors on further research.

The first conclusion to be stressed is that an ambiguity at the root of Zola's attitudes can be detected if the descriptions of rooms and furnishings are examined closely. Thus, Nana's final magnificent bed excites Zola's admiration for the quality and richness of the workmanship, and for the pleasing symbolism of the scenes depicted on it. That Nana should be surprised entertaining an ancient *roué* in this superb bed is presented as comic as well as shocking, and Zola's poetic evocation of the bed not only serves to invest it with a religious quality, but also acts as a foil to the farcical scene to follow. Indeed, many of the descriptions of the bedrooms, and dining-rooms of the rich indicate a delight on Zola's part in that very luxury he condemns. This is particularly so when the rooms or their decoration are presented as models of taste or as the expression of a personal life-style.⁽¹⁾

(1) Investigation of the degree of correlation between Zola's descriptive and actual fashions of the Second Empire lies outside the scope of the present study, as does any enquiry into Zola's own predilections in matters of colour, style and materials. The Bibliothèque Forney (Musée des Arts Décoratifs) in Paris contains some examples of wallpapers not unlike those described by Zola, with blue or grey backgrounds. Items in a small exhibition of designers' sketches (arranged by William Drummond at the Bury Street Gallery in April 1985) suggested that the pale yellows of the salons in La Curée and Une Page d'Amour reflected at least some aspects of contemporary taste. On such slight evidence, no firm conclusions are possible, but the field may be of specialist interest.

Here, the "maison Saccard" leads the field, but perhaps the most striking examples occur in Son Excellence Eugène Rougon. Clorinde's personal habits may be slovenly, her room in perpetual disorder, but Zola is obviously fascinated by her creative manipulation of her environment to express her "étonnants caprices" and hence to establish both her individuality as a woman, to whom "caprices" are allowed, and her superiority as a politician, seeking to disconcert her courtiers. Similarly, Renée's "crânerie" and Nana's destructiveness establish them as Clorinde's followers in this search for individuality in their environments.

It is perhaps the salons of Zola's characters that most clearly show this ambivalent attitude. The scene of discreet eroticism and of the openly sensual private dances, the salon is often evoked in terms of subtle, refined colour schemes, and costly, carefully chosen materials. On the one hand, the salon is, for Zola, the heartland of the bourgeois ethos, nowhere more clearly exemplified than in the miners' reaction to Hennebeau's salon in Germinal. On the other hand, Zola the wealthy collector of exotica feels unable to condemn another salon closely resembling not only that of Hennebeau, but also Zola's own home at Médan.- Sandoz's salon in L'Oeuvre. Need we be astonished that the later novels of the series suppress the salon entirely? The Hamelins in L'Argent, though bourgeois, have no need of a salon for the lives they lead, and Pascal's salon, before the final novel begins, has been successively demoted to surgery and potato store.

This last instance confirms the already well-established importance of Le Docteur Pascal in the evolution of Zola's stance in the matter of the search for gratification. Of the three domestic settings considered, one, the salon, has vanished totally from this final work, and the others have been, as Borie puts it, exorcised. Borie's point applies specifically to "La bonne chambre de la Souléïade", Clotilde's bedroom, from which the

troubling contradictions between innocence and sexuality have been banished. Less obviously, perhaps, is Zola's acceptance that eating can be happy and free from guilt. Only perhaps the meal improvised at Bennecourt in L'Oeuvre had previously possessed the gaiety, spontaneity and innocence of the meals shared by Pascal and Clotilde. The dining-room becomes purged of its associations with indulgence, and, indeed, the bedroom at one point functions as dining-room, thereby combining the renewal of both areas in one. Scenes of eating in bedrooms have hitherto been suspect in Zola's canon; Nana and Fontan are coarse, Saccard and Baroness Sandorff indecent in L'Argent, though a precursor of the innocent bedroom meal may be seen in the sexually ambivalent encounter between Nana and Georges Hugon at their midnight feast. Clotilde's room acts in more ways than the obvious one as an 'exorcism', recalling as it does so many scenes in earlier works.

Important though Le Docteur Pascal unquestionably is, one earlier work has emerged as crucial to the present enquiry, the first great repository of material for any study of Zola's techniques of description. The second major finding to be highlighted is that La Curée, far more than La Fortune des Rougon, serves as a template for much of what is to follow. Other novels may provide more developed examples (e.g. Mme Desforges's salon in Au Bonheur des Dames) or a more integrated series of images (e.g. the Muffats' ball in Nana), but by sheer range and detail, the descriptive material in La Curée imposes its imprint on novels to come. This would be as naught if Zola's use of his sources remained lifelessly documented. One of his triumphs in La Curée resides in the liveliness of the invention of a world to which the author was still an outsider. Documentation does indeed play a role: the notes on the Menier mansion for the exteriors and press cuttings describing Princess Metternich's apartments prove this. What ensures that La Curée rises above the mere retailing of notes is Zola's ability to impose a vision upon this partly listed, partly imagined world. Just as the dry catalogue of the Jardin des Plantes blends with Zola's own personal taxonomy of hothouse blooms, so the over-

furnished, over-decorated rooms of the Second Empire offer a fertile field for imagery relevant to the novel's themes. Saccard is associated with gold, Renée with flowers or flesh; hence the profusion of statuary (mainly on the façade and staircase), the repeated notations of flowers on carpets and upholstery, and, in a subtle touch, the blending of the two normally separated motifs in the metallic flowers of the ceiling in the salon, a rare meeting-place of Saccard and his wife. Other examples abound, in the descriptions of Renée's apartments, and in Zola's use of complementary settings: the Hotel Béraud, the Café Riche, and Blanche Muller's flat. Though it may be argued that Zola's descriptions in La Curée are over-exuberant and distract attention from the characters, the novel can be seen as seminal, a youthfully energetic and wonderfully rich display of a talent surely poetic at heart.

In examining the various areas of the house, reference has frequently been made to related descriptions located in public or communal buildings, a number of these being found in Au Bonheur des Dames, such as staff bedrooms and refectories, the salon and bar opened by Mouret for the customers of his store. However, a further degree of relevance to the theme can be detected in this novel, so far suggested rather than overtly examined; indeed, to cover this topic adequately would lead to a total reappraisal of the work. It is posited that the "Bonheur" be viewed as the house par excellence, the domestic setting carried to a level consistent with Zola's predilection for "le gigantisme", and this forms another major finding of the present enquiry.

A vision of the "Bonheur" as a society run along fourierist lines emerges clearly from Zola's text, as the reforms proposed by Denise or imagined by Mouret are gradually implemented [RM III p 729]. Equally, the department store clearly ranks with the markets, the mine, the Bourse, as a cogent example of Zola's preoccupation with social organisms. What is less obvious is that the store offers a large scale but public

version of the home. It is, of course, the home of many of its employees, so that Zola's description of the canteens and, more particularly, the kitchens can be taken as inflated extension of normal domestic quarters. More interest, perhaps, stems from the descriptions of the merchandise.

Arguably, Zola's department store represents only the first stage of the shop as superhome, since, for much of the novel's length, the "Bonheur" remains largely devoted to "nouveau-tés", an emporium of fabrics and clothing. Furniture and accessories figure only briefly in the later stages of its evolution, but, even in the earlier description of the shop, hints are given of the potential identification of the "Bonheur" with a house. Thus, the display of Eastern carpets takes the form of a "salon oriental" [ibid pp 470-1], another display of bedding resembles "un dortoir de pensionnaires qui dormait dans le piétinement de la clientèle" [ibid p 628]. The final chapter, with its apotheosis of virginal white, provides the most cogent parallels. Certain displays of white articles evoke the intimacy of the home strikingly made public and multiplied in a phantasmagoric vision. The central hall resembles "un grand lit blanc" under a baldaquin of white silk [ibid p 769], a profusion of female underwear leads directly to a display of layettes, "l'amante qui se réveille mère" [ibid pp 780-81], evoking the privacy of the bedroom, "une alcôve publiquement ouverte". The furniture section, "qu'une exposition de mobiliers laqués changeait en vaste chambre de jeune fille" [ibid p 786], and the silk department, "alcôve géante" [ibid p 797], complete the picture.

The apparently random display of ladies' underwear recalls episodes in other novels where clothing is scattered in the bedroom, and, indeed, the "Bonheur" evokes themes already found in homes throughout the series. The customers who gorge at the free buffet recall the guests scrambling for food in La Curée, or overeating at Gervaise's party in L'Assommoir.

The displays of all merchandise encourage the gratification of appetites, identified most keenly by Zola in his description of the "salon des dentelles", significantly named:

"On eût dit que toutes les séductions des magasins aboutissaient à cette tentation suprême, que c'était là l'alcôve reculée de la chute, le coin de perdition où les plus fortes succombaient".

[ibid p 640]

Zola's analysis here transports the reader back to the earlier scene in Mme Desforges's salon, when Mme Marty passes round the lace she has been unable to resist, and a voluptuous, almost erotic atmosphere is created, consonant with Zola's choice of the term "alcôve" in the passage quoted.

Zola also links the "Bonheur" with his depiction of scenes which move from order to disorder. The neat bedrooms and symmetrical table-settings of the domestic scene have their counterpart in the evocation of the shop departments "que les garçons avaient balayés et époussetés dès cinq heures" [ibid p 432], and in the slow start to the day's trading [ibid p 478]. The later description of the shop "comme un champ de bataille", a "débâcle", and adjectives such as "saccagés", "obstruées", "détruites", "jetées", confirm the re-emergence of the theme of the disorder which follows order, already analysed in its domestic context. A final confirmation of Zola's perception of the shop as house comes from Mouret himself, referring to the customers making free with facilities provided - buffet, reading and writing rooms - for immoral rendez-vous: "ces dames ne sont point ici chez moi, elles sont chez elles" [ibid p 625]. It seems that, though the shop wins Zola's approval as it evolves towards a more just and caring social goal, it always represents the dangerous excess of appetites, the threat of disorder and that promiscuity which Zola finds so distasteful.

A fourth finding deserving to be highlighted in a final review concerns the degree of intrusion which Zola is prepared to contrive in order to enable the reader to see an interior, or an incident, which would normally

remain closed to him. A distinction has already been made between those who seek to be seen, flaunting their activities as Gervaise does her party, and those whose homes would remain private did not Zola devise an opener of doors. Such intermediaries may be innocent witnesses, such as Mme Caroline in L'Argent, Jean Macquart in La Terre or Henriette Weiss in La Débâcle. Stemming perhaps from Gervaise's witness to the plight of Lalie Bijard in L'Assommoir, the device of the intrusive witness, moved or embarrassed by what is seen, may be considered to have become mechanical in the later novels, where Caroline, Jean and Henriette find themselves present at a series of crises in the lives of others. The invasion of the interior of others' homes underlines the fragility of privacy, ranging from M. Charles's invitation to Jean to Henriette's crossing the home of an unknown woman. The frequency of those incidents, the multiplication of different plot-strands, might be construed as Zola's invitation to his readers to reflect on the difficulty of avoiding the exposure of secrets, but equally can be taken as evidence of Zola's reliance, at this stage in his development, on devices rather than on credible dénouements.

An important element in the reader's feeling of unease when faced with such episodes as those mentioned above is that of voyeurism. Caroline's presence as Mme Mazaud discovers her husband has shot himself, Jean's witness to Elodie Charles's revelation that she knew her parents' secret, or Henriette's intuition of Gilberte's adultery form the equivalent of intrusive newspaper reporting, and carry the same voyeuristic impact.

In some cases, the witness has deliberately sought out a scandalous situation. Muffat, "pris d'une rage jalouse" [Nana RM II p 1462], breaks open the door of Nana's room to discover his father-in-law. In L'Argent, a venal servant, Clarisse, reveals to Delcambre the treachery of his mistress with Saccard [RM V p 211]. In each of these episodes, Zola carries sexual explicitness to the limits allowed by the standards of his day,

thus ensuring that his reader's full attention is engaged. We note too the participation of a servant in each episode - Zoé, Clarisse - which deepens the sense of violation, of public exposure. A similar effect stems from the use of the servants' commentary during an act of adultery between Octave and Berthe in Pot-Bouille [RM III p 266-70], though here there is no physical intrusion. Zola seems to imply a heightened sense of shame if domestics or other inferiors are involved in guilty acts, particularly sexual ones; Renée fears the scorn of Baptiste, her butler, in La Curée, and in Une Page d'Amour, the involvement of the squalid Mère Fétu in the affairs of the bourgeois lovers is a source of shame to Hélène.

The true role of the voyeuristic intruder is to stimulate the reader's curiosity and invite his complicity, this being extended to the rooms themselves as much as to the activities of the occupants. In this respect, as has been shown, Pot-Bouille is particularly rich in tantalising glimpses seen through half-open doors. Other examples confirm this: François Mouret peers through the keyhole into Faujas's room in La Conquête de Plassans; Renée Saccard visits Blanche Muller's flat incognito in La Curée; Lisa Quenu secretly inspects Florent's room in Le Ventre de Paris; Gervaise glimpses the lives of other tenants as she follows Coupeau to the Lorilleux's flat, where she is truly made to feel like an intruder, in L'Assommoir. La Débâcle represents the culmination of voyeurism, in a number of episodes. Besides Henriette's invasion of a stranger's house, already mentioned, the episode previously analysed of the salon set up in the garden should be noted, and Maurice's contorted glimpse, "le cou tordu ... par une imposte vitrée", of the Emperor's quarters [RM V p 495].

At various points in this study, an aspect of the novels has emerged

which might well repay further study. Certain novels yield few passages of sustained description despite a largely domestic setting: La Conquête de Plassans and Pot-Bouille stand out in this respect. Arguably, the restricted field of the former limits the possibilities for descriptions of rooms, since most of the action takes place in the homes of the Mourets and the Rougons. The same cannot be said of Pot-Bouille, where, as has been demonstrated, Zola describes only one of the interiors in great detail, the Duveyrier salon. Opportunities for lengthy descriptions abound, both in and out of the block of flats, but Zola chooses to limit himself to rapid sketches, sometimes linked to the glimpse through the open door discussed above. This lack of sustained description surprises all the more since the setting of both novels is in the bourgeoisie. The reader of La Curée and Une Page d'Amour, both earlier than Pot-Bouille, expects to find considerable care lavished on the descriptions of the homes of such characters, but is disappointed. In the case of La Conquête de Plassans, the tone of the novel provides a clue. The depiction of provincial intrigues and a generally ironic tone recall certain passages of Stendhal's works, and, without being an exercise in stendhalian style, the novel has the spareness and rapidity of psychological action associated with the earlier novelist. If this relationship be conceded, it follows that Zola's decision to limit the amount of purely descriptive material is in keeping with Stendhal's preference for generalised interior backgrounds to the action of his stories⁽¹⁾. The use of half-glimpses in Pot-Bouille has already been discussed: similarly restricted descriptions include the flats of Mme Juzeur, Valérie Vabre and even the Campardons, the latter the scene of a most important sub-plot, but barely described.

Equally intriguing is the absence of certain descriptions which might have been deemed necessary to the full realisation of the background of

(1) This view of La Conquête de Plassans is developed in A. Dezalay's essay "Gobineau et Zola au rendez-vous de Stendhal" in Etudes gobiniennes 1974-5 viii pp 165-176 [Klincksieck].

certain novels. Some of these have already been noted, in particular certain bedrooms. Borie points out Zola's reluctance to penetrate into what is virtually his own mother's bedroom - that of Mme Sandoz mère in L'Oeuvre. In this extreme case, the character herself is omitted other than by implication, and the reasons for Zola's reticence are obvious. Equally significantly, Zola omits any description of the bedroom of Hubert and Hubertine in Le Rêve, perhaps perceiving the childlessness of that couple as a close reflection of his own marriage. But whereas the omission of the bedroom of the Sandoz couple in no way surprises us, as it is outside the requirements of the plot, Zola seems to invite our prurient curiosity by stressing the sanctity and privacy of the Huberts' room, whilst at the same time making it clear that the couple still have physical relations. This drawing-back from the bedroom as the scene of a loving and lawful sexuality reveals much of Zola's self-imposed limits at the time of the composition of Le Rêve, a taboo which is breached only in Le Docteur Pascal.

However, such inhibitions cannot explain the omission of settings in other novels, descriptions of which might have been expected to figure. Thus, in La Curée, Saccard's "fumoir" briefly appears as a counterpart to Renée's "petit salon", though Zola does not use the room as a setting for action. This inclusion renders more mysterious the exclusion of any description of Saccard's private suite above the "fumoir", nor is it clear, even from Zola's sketches in the "dossier", where Maxime is lodged. Zola has carefully established the symmetry of opposing interests on the ground floor of the house: can it only be for reasons of plot that he balks at extending this parallelism to the upper floor also?

Other examples may be rapidly cited. In La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret, only Albine's room, given over to Serge, is described at Le Paradou. "Elle dormait dans une chambre de l'étage supérieur, où il n'eut pas l'idée de monter" [RM I p 1354], nor does Zola show any other part of the house.

In Son Excellence Eugène Rougon, Eugène's private apartments do not figure, other than in a scene set in the dining-room. Nana's salon remains closed to the reader, although the salons of other luxurious homes (Saccard, Muffat, Deberle, Desforges) are the object of careful evocation. In Au Bonheur des Dames, not only is no hint given of Octave Mouret's apartments, but Zola also creates a mystery about the living quarters of the Baudu family. Only Geneviève's bedroom is clearly described, and in Ch. I, the transition of the action from the shop to the dining-room goes unmentioned, so that the reader remains unsure of the division between the shop, open to passers-by, and the house, private and separate; the implication of dependence on the shop becomes clearer when contrasted with the strict demarcation between shop and private quarters in Le Ventre de Paris.

Such blank spaces in Zola's usually compendious account of his characters' homes indicate perhaps a negative attitude towards some aspects of rooms. It has already been noted that salons virtually disappear from the novels after L'Oeuvre, sometimes by dint of considerable violence to plausibility (L'Argent, Le Docteur Pascal). In some of the examples listed above, Zola may simply prefer concentration to dispersal, but there are signs of a deeper hostility.

Indeed, it is no exaggeration to speak of patterns of negativity in Zola's descriptions of rooms. The distaste communicated in his accounts of dining-rooms given over to gluttony, bedrooms showing evidence of sexual activity, salons housing flirtations, seductions and promiscuous dancing, extends to the minutiae of description. Food, for example, when details are given, may be refined in presentation and excellent in quality; but equally it may be insufficient, badly served or frankly poor, even revolting. The experience of the Jossier family in Pot-Bouille combines all of these into a paradigm of Zola's hostility

towards the act of eating, but similar distaste emerges from the canteen scenes in Au Bonheur des Dames, and the alternation between near-starvation and gluttony in L'Assommoir illustrates two poles equally repellent. Indeed, such negativity can be seen as outright hostility on the part of the author to whole areas of life, a hostility which changes only in the final novel of the series. This, too, is a vital issue.

Disorder has been shown to be another feature of certain rooms, equally distasteful to Zola. To this should be added heat, smell and promiscuity, or even lack of privacy. Colour schemes, too, may reveal Zola's hostility to a room or its occupants. Particular examples of this are the acid colours of Félicité's salon in La Fortune des Rougon, and the Muffat salon, both before and after its transformation. It may even be that the rapturous evocation of Renée Saccard's personal apartment may hide an underlying hostility, since the flesh tones suggest the nudity which, to Zola, at the time of La Curée, was unacceptable. Certainly, the colour red for Zola as for many other writers, suggests passion and danger, nowhere more so than in La Bête Humaine, where a complex system of references includes the red house at La Croix-de Mauftras. Negative signals of the kind quoted are in tune with Zola's desire to identify the home as a centre of self-indulgence, but surely correspond to an inner need of the novelist himself. As has been noted, the bedrooms of happy, sexually active couples seldom figure, nor do simple family meals; the 'happy' meals of the Rougon-Macquart novels are mostly improvised snacks, usually tête-à-tête. Borie interestingly develops this by exploring numerous images of over-fullness, formulating a Freudian view of Zola as an oedipal, anally-fixated writer. This cannot, of course, be refuted, but it does seem that Zola's attitudes towards certain aspects of the home were ambivalent rather than consistent.

This appears most clearly in Zola's treatment of the salon, which, it has been demonstrated, excites both his mistrust and his admiration. Zola evidently deplores what he perceives as the over-luxurious decor, the trivial occupations of the habitués, and the opportunity afforded by salon life for potentially corrupting experiences - flirtations, liaisons, acquisitiveness. For Zola, the salon also represents a weak point in the family's defences, being the most public area of a private domain. Since all who enter it, for good or ill, do so by invitation, the occupants are responsible for the consequences of any introduction. Thus, for example, in Une Page d'Amour, both Hélène Grandjean and Malignon wreak havoc in the marriage of Henri and Juliette Deberle, though the damage is ultimately repaired.

The existence of such contradictions in Zola's attitude towards salons suggests that bedrooms and dining-rooms may also disclose a less consistent negativity on the author's part than has earlier been postulated. Indeed, whilst not detracting from the general pattern of negativity, Zola's exuberantly imaginative descriptions of certain bedrooms, of certain dining-tables, suggest a pleasure in fantasising, delight in the proliferation of detail which, however much it may contribute to an overall condemnation of the way of life of, for example, the Saccards or of Nana, allows Zola to practise self-indulgence even as he criticises it.

Finally, frequent reference has been made to the physical restructuring of interiors, by means of blocked-off entries and re-assigned functions, and it has also been noted that Zola often contrives a temporary displacement of normal activities, such as eating in bedrooms or sleeping in dining-rooms. This feeling that interiors may coalesce into a flexible series of rooms is further heightened, in some bourgeois settings, by the use of portières, which may mask conventional doors, but seem to replace them, affording easy and sometimes dangerous access to private quarters; Renée's

apartments in La Curée again provide the earliest example of this. Such flexibility is occasionally extended by Zola's use of imagery, suggesting, rather than stating, that a room may exert influence beyond its normal sphere. Thus, the courtesan Irma Bécot in L'Oeuvre resides in

"une demeure princière [...] une grande alcôve de femme sensuelle, un grand lit d'amour qui commençait aux tapis du vestibule, pour monter et s'étendre jusqu'aux murs capitonnés des chambres".

[RM IV p 250]

Even more striking are suggestions that the normally private domestic world may extend outside the closed doors of the home. We note this in La Curée, where Renée's carriage evokes "une chaise longue de convalescente" [RM I pp 319-20], and where the Parc Monceau represents nature tamed and domesticated, so that

"les promeneuses y traînaient leurs jupes, mollement, comme si elles n'eussent pas quitté du pied les tapis de leurs salons"

[ibid p 496]

In Pot-Bouille, Zola suggests that the block of flats central to the action of the novel partakes of the overwhelmingly bourgeois ethos of its inhabitants, even outside the private apartments. Thus, the concierge's lodge adopts the tone of the whole house: "Cette loge était un petit salon" [RM III p 4], and on the stairs, where so often Zola leads his readers, reigns "une paix morte de salon bourgeois, soigneusement clos, où n'entrait pas un souffle du dehors" [ibid p 6]. It is perhaps not surprising to find that one of the few places outside the flats, to which the action of Pot-Bouille moves, should be to some degree equated with the flats themselves. This is the Eglise Saint-Roch, a meeting-place for the characters, both openly and in secret, and where similar preoccupations dominate. Introduced as "cossue, riante" [ibid p 144], the church displays elegance befitting a bourgeois room: "peintures d'Opéra ... lustres de cristal" [ibid p 145]. At M. Vabre's funeral, the anti-clerical faction amongst the flat-dwellers form a group outside the church reminiscent of

the "salon en plein air" during the fire on La Conquête de Plassans, and, more explicitly, the church has "la douceur cossue d'un salon bourgeois, dont on a enlevé les housses" [ibid p 364].

These examples, drawn from one novel, may serve as indicators of Zola's perception of the house as metaphor. To explore this perspective further would be to expand the scope of the present survey beyond reasonable bounds: suffice it to indicate that the room as metaphor covers such areas as the markets of Le Ventre de Paris, the Paradou garden and the department store of Au Bonheur des Dames. The closed doors of the private dwelling open far wider than might at first appear.

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