

Le Grand Transit Moderne: Changing Patterns of Mobility in French Naturalist Fiction

being a Thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

by

William Lawrence Duffy, BA (Manc.), MA (Manc.)

September 2001

HULL

...et il se dédommageait de ne pouvoir séjourner dans la capitale, en regagnant sa province par la route la plus longue.

– Flaubert, *L'Éducation sentimentale*

Nos artistes doivent trouver la poésie des gares, comme leurs pères ont trouvé celle des forêts et des fleuves.

– Zola, 'Notes parisiennes. Une exposition: les peintres impressionnistes', *Sémaphore de Marseille*, 19 April 1877

Tout s'anime, puis meurt pour se transformer.

– Maupassant, *Bel-Ami*

CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-------|
| Acknowledgments | p. iv |
| Author’s Note | v |
| Introduction: ‘Le Grand Transit Moderne’ | 1 |
| Chapter 1 A Complex Kind of Training: <i>L’Éducation sentimentale</i> , Modernity, and the Changing Phenomenology of Motion | 27 |
| Chapter 2 An Evolutionary Naturalist Intertext: The Traffic Jam as Exemplary Taxonomic Motif | 81 |
| Chapter 3 Haussmannization, Circulation and the Ideal City of <i>Au Bonheur des Dames</i> | 123 |
| Chapter 4 Convulsions, <i>Détraquement</i> and the Circulus: Zola’s Dehystericisation of Prostitution | 153 |
| Chapter 5 Beyond the Pressure Principle : Bestialisation, Anthropomorphism and the ‘Thermodynamic’ Death Instinct in Naturalist Fiction | 197 |
| Chapter 6 Maupassant, <i>Doxa</i> and the Banalisation of Modern Travel | 241 |
| Conclusion: ‘Ce Parasite Supplémentaire’ | 296 |
| Bibliography | 312 |

Acknowledgments

This project would never have seen the light of day were it not for the help, advice, support and encouragement of a great many individuals and institutions which I have been lucky enough to receive over the past six years. I arrived in Hull in 1995 to take up a position as research assistant on the *History in the Making* project, under the direction of Professor Tony Williams, whose subjection of my work to rigorous and productive scrutiny in his other role as supervisor of my doctoral research has been invaluable. It is on account of my initial role as apprentice *généticien* that I was able to begin this research, of which this thesis is the culmination; its continuation was made possible by a University of Hull three-year full research scholarship, the award of which I attribute to good fortune and the advocacy of senior colleagues in the Department of French at Hull, notably Tony Williams himself and Professor Pauline Smith. I should also like to thank Dr Alan Hindley, Head of the Department of French for much of my time at Hull, for providing me with gainful employment, and also, in his role as Head of the School of European Languages and Cultures, along with his successor Dr Roel Vismans, for financial support for visits to conferences and major research libraries, supplemented by assistance from the Faculty of Arts research budget. Support for the organisation of graduate research conferences in Hull, and resulting publications (in which the pivotal role of Dr Brian Levy is duly acknowledged) was instrumental in providing a valuable platform for previous manifestations of parts of this thesis, as well as in immersing me in a wider community of research students whose varied enthusiasms were of immeasurable benefit to my own. Members of this wider community I would like to single out for special recognition of their beneficial interest in my work are Nicola Cotton, Patrick Crowley and Jonathan Patrick. It was in Hull, however, that I enjoyed the greatest support from fellow research students, notably Adrian Tudor and Catherine Emerson, whose constant encouragement has been beyond the call of duty.

I would like to acknowledge provision by institutions and individuals not mentioned already, at various times during my research, of fora at seminars and conferences for work in progress: the French Research Seminars at Oxford and Trinity College Dublin, Anne Frémiot, Paul Scott, Alison Fell, Chris Tinker, Paul Rowe, David Scott, Geoff Woollen and Mike Wetherill, who is due a special word of thanks for his initial suggestion, during a perusal of a Flaubert manuscript prior to my departure from Manchester to Hull, that modern transport might prove a productive focus for research in nineteenth-century fiction.

Although this is a Hull PhD, its completion became bound up with (albeit perhaps fortuitously delayed by) employment elsewhere. I would like therefore to thank colleagues at University College Dublin and the University of Ulster for their support and forbearance during the completion of this thesis.

Finally, I would like to thank family members and other gracious hosts (notably during research trips to Paris and London), whose logistical, material and moral support will not go unrecognized.

Author's Note

Part of Chapter One has appeared as 'Flaubert traduit Carnot?: *L'Éducation sentimentale* and the Structure of Thermodynamic Revolutions', in *La Nature dévoilée: French Literary Responses to Science*, ed. by Larry Duffy and Catherine Emerson (Hull: Department of French, University of Hull, 2000), pp. 61-78.

A section of Chapter Two has appeared as 'Preserves of Nature: Traffic Jams and Garden furniture in Zola's *La Curée*', in *Les Lieux interdits: Transgression and French Literature*, ed. by Larry Duffy and Adrian Tudor (Hull: Hull University Press, 1998), pp. 205-16.

Part of Chapter Five has been published as 'Beyond the Pressure Principle: a Thermodynamic Investigation of the Death Instinct in *La Bête humaine*', in *Fin de siècle?*, ed. by Anne Frémiot (Nottingham: University of Nottingham Department of French, 1998), pp. 27-38.

The section of Chapter Six dealing with Maupassant's short fiction has previously been published as '*È pericoloso sporgersi*: The Hysteria of Compartmental Narrative in Maupassant's *Contes*', *Excavatio*, 12 (1999), 82-91.

Introduction

‘Le Grand Transit Moderne’

The title of this thesis is inspired by Émile Zola’s statement of intent for his 1890 novel *La Bête humaine*. In Zola’s preparatory notes, the term ‘le grand transit moderne’ recurs as a designation for the background against which the novel’s ‘drame mystérieux et terrifiant’ is to unfold.¹ While it appears as an isolated, perhaps throwaway, term in the first pages of the ‘plan définitif’, Zola subsequently elaborates upon it in the *ébauche*:

Enfin, les chemins de fer comme cadre. Je voudrais garder pendant tout le roman la grande circulation d’une ligne comme accompagnement continu. Détacher tout ce drame mystérieux et effrayant sur le grand transit moderne: tout cela au milieu du tintement du télégraphe, de la sonnerie des cloches, du sifflement des locomotives, du roulement des trains, etc. – La gare de tête à Paris, et cet être, ce serpent de fer dont la colonne vertébrale est la ligne, les membres les embranchements avec leurs rameaux nerveux; enfin les villes d’arrivée qui sont comme les extrémités d’un corps, les mains et les pieds.²

What this seems to indicate is that ‘le grand transit moderne’ is shorthand for the activity of the railway and railway-related infrastructure of late-nineteenth-century France, considered not only in a real sense, but also in terms which exploit this infrastructure’s metaphorical potential. ‘Le grand transit moderne’ is the late-nineteenth-century social body in movement. And the infrastructure is indeed perceived organically, as a body. Later in the *ébauche*, Zola, formulating the description which is to take place in the actual body of the work, notes that ‘il faudrait y mettre beaucoup de monde, mais pas en première, à voir la

¹ Émile Zola, *dossier préparatoire* for *La Bête humaine*, Bibliothèque Nationale, Nouvelles acquisitions françaises, 10274. The term appears first of all in the ‘Plan définitif’, f° 290: ‘Drame mystérieux et terrifiant sous le grand transit moderne’, and f° 292: ‘Le grand Transit, la foule’.

² B.N., N.a.f., 10274, f°s 350-51.

composition de ce train, pour que le monde entier, le grand transit y soit représenté'.³ 'Le grand transit', then, is a society, a world, in motion. Present here is almost an acknowledgement that the modern world is one founded on movement. 'Transit' is not just movement on a railway network, but an incredibly complex system of organic relationships founded on movement. It can be as mundane as railway traffic had become by the 1880s, yet can also be stretched to its metaphorical limits to signify the organic workings of the social body, whether these be 'nervous' or even digestive.⁴ The key feature of the modern world, from this perspective, is movement. And this is the key principle of the present study, that is, that the world depicted by fiction such as Zola's is indissociable not only from the modern forms of transport that developed in the nineteenth century and the possibilities for rapid movement they engendered, but also, and equally importantly, from the notion of movement in a much wider sense. The nineteenth century, was, after all, an era which ushered in unprecedented transformations in the relationship between the individual and the physical environment, occasioned and characterised by changing patterns of mobility, to the extent that it could almost be identified with movement.

Françoise Gaillard writes:

Pour ce qui est de bouger, il bouge le dix-neuvième siècle! Socialement, il invente la mobilité des conditions; politiquement il subit les secousses des révolutions; économiquement il découvre le flux des capitaux. Le mouvement lui plaît. Le mouvement lui sied. Il aime à le représenter littérairement, à le restituer picturalement, à le décomposer photographiquement avant de pouvoir le reproduire par l'image du mouvement, par le cinéma. Il aime à en accélérer l'allure par des inventions techniques qui excitent les imaginations. Il révolutionne tous les modes de locomotion. Il rêve de vitesse, de communication...il rêve que s'abolissent les distances entre les lieux, entre les âges. Il va jusqu'à imaginer des vaisseaux spatiaux et des machines à remonter le temps. 'Mobilité', tel est l'impératif de la modernité mais il a son revers: *instabilité*'.⁵

³ B.N., N.a.f., 10274, f° 396.

⁴ In this sense, the notion of 'transit' is not restricted to *La Bête humaine*, but might be applied especially to *Germinal*, where the workings of the mine are repeatedly represented in terms of what might be referred to as a 'transit digestif'.

⁵ Françoise Gaillard, "'Où": L'inconnue d'un siècle qui pourtant va de l'avant', in *Moving Forward, Holding Fast. The Dynamics of Nineteenth-Century French Culture*, ed. by Barbara T. Cooper and Mary Donaldson-Evans (Amsterdam-Atlanta: Rodopi, 1997), pp. 201-15 (p. 201).

Indeed, the nineteenth century may well have been witness to what Alain Corbin refers to as ‘le raccourcissement des horizons’, but this essentially physical transformation of mobility concealed much deeper transformations, with their accompanying anxieties:

Plus torturante encore se révèle la perception de la mobilité, de l’instabilité géographique, professionnelle, sociale; l’angoisse, ici, naît du spectacle de la distorsion instaurée entre les origines et les statuts. Alors pèse le sentiment d’appartenir à une société flottante, en perpétuel mouvement, composée d’individus qui échappent désormais à la fixité des liens et qui manifestent un amour extrême du déplacement. Au brouillage s’ajoutent donc l’incertitude des positions et la peur du déclassement. Le raccourcissement des durées et des délais, celui du temps nécessaire à la satisfaction des désirs et à l’épuisement des plaisirs, engendre une instabilité qui augmente l’impression de confusion et qui contribue à la dysharmonie au sein d’un espace social informe, soumis à un total désordre.⁶

If there is, as Gaillard and Corbin suggest, a fundamental sense of instability or disharmony essential to the mobility characterising the nineteenth century, it is because the world, and society, are perceived in terms of systems, networks, and organisms, in literature as in other discourses. ‘Le grand transit moderne’ in the understanding of the present study is not simply movement in a pure sense, but the mobile expression of an organic infrastructure, which, like any organism, threatens to break down and become destabilised, balancing nineteenth-century optimism and confidence in Progress with the underlying fear of the collapse of the unprecedentedly sophisticated and complex social order. Mobility cannot be considered in isolation from systems. It is for this reason that this thesis examines changing patterns of mobility in the nineteenth century in the context of their representation by naturalist fiction. Naturalist fiction is an ideal vehicle for the representation of such phenomena, not only because of its interaction with the real world and meticulous documentation of the modern, but also because of its obsession with the organic, with the

⁶ Alain Corbin, ‘Le XIXe siècle ou la nécessité de l’assemblage’, in *L’Invention du XIXe siècle: Le XIXe siècle par lui-même*, textes réunis et publiés par Alain Corbin, Pierre Georgel, Stéphane Guéjan, Stéphane Michaud, Max Milner et Nicole Sarry, (Paris: Klincksieck, 1999), pp. 152-59 (p. 155).

network, and above all with dysfunction. Yves Chevrel writes that ‘le grand thème, l’unique thème de l’écrivain naturaliste est [...] le monde’, and that the naturalist conception of the profession of writer was engagement in that world; important, also, in the present context is the fact that that world was essentially a mobile system, the ultimate expression of ‘le grand transit moderne’, but one which could become derailed at any moment:

Le monde est perçu d’abord comme un *organisme en mouvement*, tantôt sur le modèle biologique, tantôt sur un modèle mécanique. Dans ces conditions, l’œuvre naturaliste est le plus souvent conçue comme l’exploration d’un système, la mise en évidence de ses rouages, de ses règles de fonctionnement – ou, sans doute parce que *littérairement* plus intéressants, des cas de *dysfonctionnement*: que se passe-t-il quand le mécanisme se détraque ou se bloque?⁷

In this context of the notion of movement, and particularly of movement by modern means rooted in networks, dysfunction is all the more interesting from a literary point of view. And literature as much as anything else is a focus of this thesis. Movement is an ideal point of access to the evolution of mimetic literature in the late nineteenth century. Chevrel, glossing the problematic distinction between realism and naturalism, comments that ‘le réalisme pouvait prétendre renouveler la littérature, le naturalisme déplace le problème en refusant de se situer au seul plan littéraire’.⁸ Naturalist fiction went beyond mere mimesis, linking what it depicted with a whole range of other issues. According to David Baguley, ‘the attraction and odium that it caused were due to the combination that it entailed of the familiarising mimetic procedures of realist fiction and a fundamentally disturbing body of themes’.⁹ That is, no phenomenon could be considered in isolation. So too, for the critic of naturalist fiction, no theme, such as transport, can be considered in isolation from the wider

⁷ Yves Chevrel, *Le Naturalisme* (Paris: P.U.F., 1982), pp. 99-100; pp. 100-01, emphasis in original.

⁸ Chevrel, *Le Naturalisme*, p. 27.

⁹ David Baguley, *Naturalist Fiction. The Entropic Vision* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 233.

social, technological and philosophical context of the late nineteenth century. Baguley writes that ‘thematic criticism has now long been out of favour and is often dismissed as an outmoded or unsophisticated, uninventive process of inventorying, as modern theories of literature have apparently evolved at the expense of thematic studies’.¹⁰ The dismissal of such criticism is more than justified if its theme is decontextualised. In the case of our theme, a classic example of a work about the literary depiction of transport in the nineteenth century is Marc Baroli’s *Le Train dans la littérature française*, a diligently compiled inventory of appearances of the train in the catalogue of French literature from the early nineteenth century onwards.¹¹ While it would be unfair to say that this work contains no analysis, its exhaustive listing of instances of literary representation of trains prevents any real sense of generic development from coming across (though that indeed is not its purpose); it is a work about trains rather than a work about literature. Where this study principally differs in approach from such works is in its emphasis on the centrality of the way movement and systems of movement are perceived to the fundamental way in which literature evolves in its depiction of the world, rather than on the interesting way in which literary work a, b, or c depicts mode of conveyance x, y or z. This is at least partly because at root, it is impossible to consider any new mode of conveyance purely on its own terms. The history of the railway in France illustrates this amply, and may provide an indication as to why the train (or any other new mode of transport surgically extracted from the infrastructural body) cannot serve productively as sole focal theme for examination of a literature which represents the world in terms of systematised movement.

It is fruitless to talk about the locomotive, earth-shatteringly visible though it was as emblematic symbol of technological modernity, without considering it first of all as part of

¹⁰ Baguley, *Naturalist Fiction*, p. 204.

¹¹ Marc Baroli, *Le Train dans la littérature française* (Paris: Éditions N.M., 1969).

a 'machine ensemble'. As Wolfgang Schivelbusch points out, 'all initial definitions of the railroad unanimously describe it as a machine consisting of the rails and of the vehicles running on them'.¹² Furthermore, this 'machine' was not itself independent of other systems already in existence. The railway network itself, after all, did not emerge overnight as an immediate response to the invention of the locomotive. Christophe Studeny writes that 'on associe souvent, assez confusément, l'entrée de la France dans l'ère de la vitesse avec l'avènement de ce mode nouveau de locomotion: parallèle à la fois justifié et partiellement inexact'.¹³ While in a world where 'le pas du cheval constituait depuis toujours l'étalon de la mobilité', 'la vitesse sur rail brise les cercles locaux d'existence [...] et provoque le passage irréversible du jour à l'heure comme scansion nouvelle du rythme de déplacement et de vie', it was simply not the case that there was a 'synchronisme parfait entre l'ère de vitesse et le développement du rail'. Rather, 'le galop a montré la route'.¹⁴ Whereas the shock of speed is usually considered in terms of the transition from horse-power to high-speed locomotion, there had already occurred a passage from step, to trot, to gallop, that is, from speeds of 15 to up to 40 kilometres per hour. This had been made possible by the development of a highly sophisticated and centralised road network in the previous century. According to the transport historian François Caron:

Les fondements institutionnels et idéologiques sur lesquels repose l'organisation des chemins de fer français ont été jetés au XVIIIe et non au XIXe siècle. Leur développement n'est pas le produit d'une 'révolution' qui aurait modifié de fond en comble le système français de transports.¹⁵

¹² Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey. Trains and Travel in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980), pp. 19-20.

¹³ Christophe Studeny, *L'Invention de la vitesse. France, XVIIIe-XXe siècle* (Paris: Gallimard, 1995), p. 216.

¹⁴ Studeny, *L'Invention de la vitesse*, pp. 216-17.

¹⁵ François Caron, *Histoire des Chemins de Fer en France*, 2 vols (Paris: Fayard, 1997), I: 1740-1883, p. 9. This volume hereinafter referred to as Caron, I.

Rather, the extensiveness of the French railway network in the nineteenth century can be attributed to the development of a ‘culture de réseaux [...], dont les composantes principales sont politiques et juridiques, technologiques et sociales, économiques et financières’.¹⁶ This culture was fostered under the Ancien Régime, and maintained by subsequent dispensations which, irrespective of their differing ideological characters, had in common a centralising tendency. The idea of the network, therefore, pre-exists railway technology, and, moreover, is highly specific to France. The transport policy of the Ancien Régime, based in the creation of a highly centralised road and canal network, led to what Caron refers to as a ‘nouvel espace national’.¹⁷ Already we can see, therefore, that the train is only part of the wider emergence of an organic network of communication. The road network, based on ‘une vision cohérente et centralisatrice de l’aménagement du territoire’ leading to the commencement of a major road-building programme in 1738, had its origins in political and economic imperatives, and was facilitated by advances in cartography and engineering.¹⁸ Whereas until the mid-eighteenth century, roads had generally followed whatever paths local geography would allow, the emergence of ‘la notion de tracé’ meant that many towns were now bypassed by roads which essentially followed the shortest routes available from Paris to regional capitals or borders. It did not matter that the new roads did not follow traditional routes; they were not there to serve existing traffic, but rather, were constructed deliberately to create new traffic and thereby generate economic prosperity (at least for those areas fortunate enough to be traversed by them). Also, the network was constructed according to an essentially hierarchical conception, consisting of *grandes routes*, *routes*, *grands chemins* (also known as *chemins royaux*), and *chemins de*

¹⁶ Caron, I, 169.

¹⁷ Caron, I, 32.

¹⁸ Caron, I, 11, 19.

traverse. The primary routes went from Paris to each region and to the frontiers, the secondary routes between regional capitals, and the tertiary routes within regions.¹⁹ This infrastructure continued to be developed by the Republic and the Empire; it was the combination of the centralising administrative tendencies of the various régimes with new technological developments which laid the groundwork for the railway network. It was precisely because engineering was integrated into the development of this network that the technological evolution leading to the railway network was able to take place in the way it did, that is, within the evolution of the network; the ultimate conception and economic exploitation of the railway network was to be informed by the techniques and models of road and water transport. The economic relationship between central political power and the transport infrastructure also played a significant role. Throughout the age of stage-coach travel, the rapidity of which was made possible by an extensive network of paved roads, there were constant attempts to privatise and nationalise, reprivatise and renationalise mail and stage coaches. Government essentially saw state control of transport as an element of control over the national territory; by the 1830s it was a commonplace that ‘les voies de communication construisent l’unité du corps social’.²⁰ This was an ideological battle which was replayed when railways came into their own, from the late 1830s onward, and it was paralleled in the technological arena, since the main players in the eventual development of the railway network were two distinct groups of engineers: those from the Ponts et Chaussées, closely identified with the state, who had been the centralising technological force behind the road network, and a wider field of independent engineers, scientists and inventors.

¹⁹ Caron, I, 20. Caron notes (p. 23) that until the late-twentieth-century construction of *autoroutes*, rapid displacement within France was impossible other than via successive versions of this network.

²⁰ Caron, I, 42.

One of the foremost among these latter was Marc Séguin, engineer of the first suspension bridge in France, who with his four brothers developed the railway line between St-Étienne and Lyon in the 1830s. The first railway to open in France had been a line built for transporting coal between Andrézieux and St-Étienne; likewise, the original intention for the line to Lyon had been the transportation of ore. Both these lines quickly adapted to passenger transport, and while both had started off using animal traction, locomotives were introduced to Séguin's line in 1836. This line, inspired by the Manchester-Liverpool railway, was much more sophisticated than its predecessor, using tunnels and viaducts to 'corriger la nature' rather than trying to adapt to the environment. It was the precursor in form of most of the subsequent rail infrastructure.²¹ While these railways were conceived primarily from an industrial point of view, with their aim being to create profits for the mining companies funding them, there had emerged in the early 1830s 'un véritable lobby ferroviaire' which saw profitability lying essentially in the creation of a network rather than in one-off enterprises scattered in regions remote from Paris. This lobby's emergence owed quite a lot to Saint-Simonian political activity. In 1832 the Saint-Simonian newspaper *Le Globe* carried a series of articles 'qui présentaient au public éclairé un programme cohérent d'édification d'une société industrielle dont le chemin de fer formait une composante essentielle'.²² The railway considered symbolically as 'fondateur d'un nouveau pouvoir reposant sur le contrôle du savoir' was hardly what Séguin and other engineers had in mind, but the constant confrontation between theory and practice contributed to the development of a 'science ferroviaire' which brought together the spirit of independent technological innovation and the 'esprit de système' of the corps des Ponts et Chaussées and the state. If there was an institutional rallying point for the former camp, it was the École centrale,

²¹ Caron, I, 87.

²² Caron, I, 92.

where a railway engineering course had been running since 1831.²³ The culture clash between the Ponts et Chaussées and the École centrale represented not just professional rivalry, but a difference in perspective over what the priorities of transport technology should be. The tension between the desire to adapt the network technology of the roads and canals, and the desire to prioritise mastery of locomotive technology was paralleled by an ideological conflict between state and private financing and control. This political dimension ‘opposait à une vision étatiste de l’ordre social, d’essence monarchique, une vision individualiste, d’essence libérale’.²⁴ The result on all fronts was classically synthetic. Locomotive technology was harnessed to the infrastructural network, and eventual management of the railways was essentially by public-private partnership. Whereas according to a law passed in 1833, concessions to private companies could only be granted if integrated into an overall plan defined by the state, an eventual compromise came about in 1842. This was regarded as necessary not least because of the particular circumstances of France: the country’s size meant that railway construction was much more expensive than in Britain. Because of this, only massive financial investment from the ‘haute banque parisienne’ could realistically finance railway development. So even private finance initiatives in France were to an extent centralised. When concessions were granted, a law of June 1842 ruled that any major lines had to emanate from Paris, serving regional capitals and frontiers. There was a further imperative to centralisation, rooted in national pride, and a sense of technological inferiority in relation to Britain, so that the railway appeared as ‘un moyen de placer la nation française aux avant-postes du progrès et de la modernité, de lui épargner une défaite technologique’.²⁵ Railway construction, then, took off in the 1840s,

²³ Caron, I, 94.

²⁴ Caron, I, 113.

²⁵ Caron, I, 99.

and the network which emerged overlaid to an extent (paradoxically, since this meant, in spite of the navigation technology available, the choice of indirect routes over direct ones) the road network developed in the previous century. The technological and financial foundations had been laid, but it was during the Second Empire that the most significant growth came about. The boom of the 1840s, during which concessions had been granted to the major private railway companies, came to an abrupt end with the financial crisis of 1847 and the events of 1848, which prompted an unsuccessful attempt by the Republican government to repurchase the railways.²⁶ The Coup d'État was the starting point for a period of massive investment in the railways, characterised by what Caron refers to as 'la double logique du monopole et de la garantie'.²⁷ Railway affairs were overseen by a Commission centrale des chemins de fer, and another compromise was achieved in 1859: over the next four years, conventions were signed between the state and six railway companies, which implicitly accepted the monopoly principle, although a limited amount of competition was permitted. The monopoly was a direct consequence of the move towards a national network, in that, among other reasons, it was necessary to subsidise poorer regions of France. This fitted in with the Napoleonic project. Napoléon III was an enthusiast for *grands travaux*, and saw the state as at least a facilitator of infrastructural development, if not actually a mechanism for carrying it out directly. The result of state-encouraged expansion in the 1860s was that by 1870, all major cities in France were within 24 hours of

²⁶ The Revolution occasioned numerous strikes by railway workers, and attacks on the railway infrastructure. In April 1848, Garnier-Pagès met with representatives of the railway companies to discuss the acquisition of the railways by the state as a means of bringing about 'une œuvre de progrès pour tous' to replace the Ateliers nationaux. This plan was abandoned once the events of June superseded a political debate which had become a wider one on democracy and the role of the state (Caron, I, 198).

²⁷ Caron, I, 170

Paris.²⁸ In terms of traffic, there was massive expansion also: the number of passengers rose from 6.33 million in 1841 to 100 million in 1867.²⁹

One of the great paradoxes of the Second Empire, of course, was that of unprecedented capitalist growth subordinated to *étatisme*. And it is here that we see the idea of the network go far beyond the railways. The transformation of Paris from a cluttered medieval city of narrow streets into a network of massive interconnecting boulevards by Baron Georges-Eugène Haussmann, Préfet de la Seine under Napoléon III, was underpinned by the same principle: it was financed by a mixture of public and private capital, and implemented by a repressive and centralising state. Normal methods of taxation would have been inadequate for such a massive project, so Haussmann resorted to unorthodox means of financing. David Pinkney remarks that under a democratic régime, questions would have been raised much earlier about this than they eventually were. Indeed, 'the transformation of the city within two short decades probably would not have been accomplished in a state less authoritarian than the Second Empire'.³⁰ Much has been said about the strategic quality of the three networks of boulevards sufficiently wide to prevent the satisfactory erection of barricades and interconnected in such a way as to permit the rapid movement of troops based in barracks located throughout the new city. For T.J. Clark, 'there is no disputing that Haussmann's modernity was his wish to put an end to insurrection', and that strategic considerations were of primacy.³¹ Pinkney, of whom Clark is perhaps justifiably rather sceptical, given subsequent events, holds that this was not the prime motivation, but what does appear certain is that the project was intended to reinforce

²⁸ Studeny, *L'Invention de la vitesse*, p. 243.

²⁹ Studeny, *L'Invention de la vitesse*, p. 255. According to Caron (I, 591), rail traffic grew at an annual rate of 9% during the Second Empire.

³⁰ David Pinkney, *Napoleon III and the Rebuilding of Paris* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958), p. 5.

³¹ T.J. Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life. Paris in the Art of Manet and his Followers* (New York: Knopf, 1985), p. 39.

the power and prestige of the Empire.³² Another principal motivating factor was the desire to render 'the city more liveable by facilitating the movement of traffic'.³³ And irrespective of motivation, one of the most visible results of Haussmannization was the massive increase in 'circulation': traffic doubled between 1853 and 1859, and continued to increase throughout the 1860s. And again, as with the railway network, the boulevards themselves cannot be considered in isolation. The product of Haussmann's plan, as Clark says, far exceeded his intentions.³⁴ The circulatory network of Second-Empire Paris not only fitted into the wider transport network, so that some of the boulevards were culminating points of 'routes royales', while others, such as the Boulevard de Strasbourg, were built specifically to allow people and goods to move rapidly between the massive new railway terminals and the city centre, but was also emblematic of a new economy of commodification and circulation.³⁵ This economy was manifested most visibly in the physical sense of the transportation and sale of goods. Baltard's Halles were an integral part of the redevelopment of Paris, as well as a focal point for the sale of produce coming in from the environs of Paris and much further afield. Aside from its fitting in to the transport network near the intersection of the *grands axes* by way of the creation of a new *quartier des Halles*, which Haussmann initially intended to complement by the building of an underground

³² Pinkney, *Napoleon III and the Rebuilding of Paris*, pp. 35-37. According to Claire Hancock, 'while London was the mart of a huge empire, Paris was transformed into the main sphere of display of its imperial regime'. Hancock argues that whereas London's economy was transformed by overseas imperial possessions, the 'Imperialist' vision of Paris was more a case of authoritarianism and the personal involvement of a self-styled Emperor. See '*Capitale du plaisir: the remaking of imperial Paris*', in *Imperial Cities. Landscape, Display and Identity*, ed. by Felix Driver and David Gilbert (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), pp. 64-77 (p. 64, p. 66).

³³ Pinkney, *Napoleon III and the Rebuilding of Paris*, p. 39.

³⁴ Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life*, p. 41.

³⁵ According to Caron, 'l'urbanisme du Second Empire découlait en grande partie des besoins de l'exploitation des chemins de fer. Le cas de la gare du Nord est, de ce point de vue, démonstratif. Elle fut déplacée vers l'ouest, de façon que la façade soit sur la rue de Dunkerque. L'exploitation, ainsi, ne fut pas gênée par les travaux. La compagnie participa aux dépenses de prolongement de la rue La Fayette jusqu'à la rue Cadet. De grandes cours furent aménagées. Le quartier de la gare Montparnasse évolua de manière identique' (I, 321). Clark (p. 54) writes that 'the straight lines to the railway stations were meant to express the fact that Paris was henceforth part of a national and international economy'.

railway linking it to the Petite Ceinture, the market complex also fitted in architecturally with the circulatory aesthetic of the age. Napoléon III, according to the *échos* of a contemporary newspaper, was insistent on this:

Ce qui frappa surtout l'Empereur [...], ce fut la possibilité d'appliquer à la construction des halles un système analogue à celui qui a été suivi pour nos grandes gares de chemin de fer. En effet ce mode de construction, fondé sur l'emploi de la fonte et du fer, ne convient pas moins aux unes qu'aux autres puisqu'il présente l'avantage de laisser l'espace complètement libre à l'air, à la lumière, à la circulation, ce qu'on doit rechercher dans les halles aussi bien que dans les gares.³⁶

This metal and glass architecture was also the basis for the exhibition palaces, emblems of the circulation of goods from around the world, and themselves generators of mass human movement, as expressed in Ernest Renan's statement that 'l'Europe s'est déplacée pour voir des marchandises'.³⁷ But perhaps the most significant sites for the display and sale of goods which had ceased to be objects considered in terms of their use value, and become commodities in a circulatory economy, were the department stores of Paris, whose rise can be traced to the acquisition in 1852 by Aristide Boucicaut of *Le Bon Marché*. These too were integrated, physically and symbolically, into the network developed by Haussmann and Louis-Napoléon, who, argues Michael Miller, 'created the very conditions by which the new stores could tap the vast Parisian market'.³⁸ According to Clark:

The *grands magasins* were the signs – the instruments – of one form of capital's replacing another; and in that they obeyed the general logic of Haussmannization. Were they not built

³⁶ Article in *Le Moniteur Universel*, 17 December 1853, cited in Hervé Maneglier, *Paris Impérial. La vie quotidienne sous le Second Empire* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1990), p. 137. According to Caron (I, 328), Napoléon had been so impressed by the main hall of Flachat's and Armand's Saint-Germain station at the Place de l'Europe (later the Gare St-Lazare), that in opening the competition for the design of the Halles, he actually specified a wholly metal structure.

³⁷ Ernest Renan on the 1855 Exposition Universelle, cited in Walter Benjamin, *Paris, Capitale du XIXe siècle*, trad. Jean Lacoste, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Paris: Cerf, 1993), p. 199. Benjamin attributes the quotation twice elsewhere to Taine, as does Rachel Bowlby in *Just Looking. Consumer Culture in Dreiser, Gissing and Zola* (London: Methuen, 1985), p. 1. Lacoste confirms Renan as the source (p. 925, n. 12).

³⁸ Michael Miller, *The Bon Marché. Bourgeois Culture and the Department Store, 1869-1920* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1981), p. 36.

[...] with profits derived from the new boulevards and property speculation? [...]. Did they not depend, with windows all hissing with gas till well past nightfall [...] on the Baron's policemen, his buses and trains, his wide sidewalks, and his passion for 'circulation'?³⁹

Underpinning all this visible urban circulation, however, in the wider scheme of capitalist development, was an essentially circulatory economy of commodities, seen by Marx in the following terms:

The continual movement in circuits of the two antithetical metamorphoses of commodities, or the never ceasing alternation of sale and purchase, is reflected in the restless currency of money, or in the function that money performs of a *perpetuum mobile* of circulation. But so soon as the series of metamorphoses is interrupted, so soon as sales are not supplemented by subsequent purchases, money ceases to be mobilised; it is transformed, as Boisguillebert says, from 'meuble' into 'immeuble', from movable into immovable, from coin into money.⁴⁰

What is interesting here is the use of multiple metaphors which express the newly dominant form of economic exchange in terms of physical movement within systems, networks, circuits, and notably, in terms of property development of the kind which occurred during Haussmannization. Also present is the notion of dysfunction, represented in terms of an interruption of perpetual movement, which, importantly and paradoxically, appears to be integral to the functioning of the circulatory system itself. The status of circulation as the locus of dysfunction implied here begins to make more sense if the origins of circulation as a metaphor are examined. These can be traced to the appearance of William Harvey's *De motu cordis* in 1642. According to the urban historian Richard Sennett:

Through discoveries he made about the circulation of the blood, Harvey launched a scientific revolution in the understanding of the body [...]. The new understandings of the body coincided with the birth of modern capitalism, and helped bring into being the great social transformation we call individualism. The modern individual is, above all else, a mobile human being. Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* first reckoned what Harvey's discoveries would lead to in this regard, for Adam Smith imagined the free market of labor and goods operating much like freely circulating blood within the body and with similarly

³⁹ Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life*, p. 55.

⁴⁰ Karl Marx, *Capital*, 3 Vols (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1977), I, 130.

life-giving consequences. Smith, in observing the frantic business behavior of his contemporaries, recognized a design. Circulation of goods and money proved more profitable than fixed and stable possession.⁴¹

The body, therefore, became an overarching metaphor for the emerging capitalist economy, and also for the city: by the eighteenth century, 'planners sought to make the city a place in which people could move and breathe freely, a city of flowing arteries and veins through which people streamed like healthy blood corpuscles'.⁴² By the mid-nineteenth century, it was not just people, of course, but also vehicles, which streamed through these arteries and veins. Furthermore, the latter were not merely the wide boulevards of Haussmann's Paris, but also the railway lines organised in a network throughout metropolitan France. In short, the transport infrastructure, 'le grand transit moderne' as it were, was indissociable in conception from the social body of the Second Empire, a body founded on systematised circulatory movement. But what of dysfunction? One way in which the body can be presented as failing to function correctly is in terms of disease. Disease functions also, therefore, as a powerful metaphor for the dysfunction of systems that can be understood metaphorically in terms of the body, whether these be Paris, bourgeois society, the Napoleonic régime, the railway locomotive, the department store, the human mind, and so on. Susan Sontag writes that:

Throughout the nineteenth century, disease metaphors became more virulent, preposterous, demagogic. And there is an increasing tendency to call any situation one disapproves of a disease. Disease, which could be considered as much a part of nature as is health, became the synonym of whatever was 'unnatural'.⁴³

⁴¹ Richard Sennett, *Flesh and Stone. The Body and the City in Western Civilization* (London: Faber and Faber, 1994), pp. 255-56.

⁴² Sennett, *Flesh and Stone*, p. 256.

⁴³ Susan Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor* (1978), in *Illness as Metaphor; Aids and its Metaphors* (London: Penguin, 1991), p. 75.

It is a major premise of this thesis that this apparent contradiction is central to the world depicted by naturalist fiction. While the main focus for investigation is not the body, but systems of movement, both real and abstract, understood in the context of the historical background outlined above, the idea that the source of a system's dysfunction is actually part of nature, often integral to the natural or technological processes underpinning it, is a key one. Naturalism, understood by one nineteenth-century definition as 'système de ceux qui attribuent tout à la nature comme premier principe', refuses on the other hand to accept the synonymy of the dysfunctional with the 'unnatural'.⁴⁴ The reason why this study focuses on movement is that the various systems outlined above, whether explicitly systems of movement or not, are conceived in nineteenth-century discourses in terms of movement as much as in terms of the body. Movement is central to the nineteenth century's understanding of itself, which became increasingly voiced in terms of sociological, technological, scientific and often pseudo-scientific discourses which presented phenomena as smoothly functioning organisms founded on movement, but forever threatened by destabilising elements which were perceived as essentially external. These discourses were represented – but very importantly, radically challenged – by a literature whose project was to portray the world as it actually was. Now, it might be argued that nineteenth-century realism had the latter aim in mind, but where naturalism departed from realism was in the very incorporation of these discourses into its fictions, very often in such a way that they are questioned implicitly rather than explicitly, such is their apparently seamless imbrication within a multitude of textual voices. Roland Barthes writes of the 'text' that it should be understood according to its etymological basis:

⁴⁴ Littré, cited in Chevrel, *Le Naturalisme*, p. 19.

C'est un *tissu*; mais alors que précédemment la critique [...] mettait unanimement l'accent sur le 'tissu' fini (le texte étant un voile derrière lequel il fallait aller chercher la vérité, le message réel, bref le *sens*), la théorie actuelle du texte se détourne du texte-voile et cherche à percevoir le tissu dans sa texture, dans l'entrelacs des codes des formules, des signifiants, au sein duquel le sujet se place et se défait, telle une araignée qui se dissoudrait elle-même dans sa toile.⁴⁵

For the present study, the texts which will be examined are considered in terms of their being 'tissus', indeed networks of discourses which depict the web of imbricated systems which emerged in nineteenth-century France, the activity upon them, and the subject's apprehension of them.⁴⁶ Yves Chevrel writes that 'le tissu même du texte naturaliste se met en place à partir d'une véritable pathologie sociale'; it is the manifestation of that pathology in texts depicting movement that is our prime focus.⁴⁷

If there is a 'master discourse' which naturalist fiction questions, it is that which proclaims the self-confidence and apparent self-sufficiency of nineteenth-century culture and society. This reaches its apotheosis – and ultimately meets its downfall – in the Second Empire, by which time a sophisticated transport infrastructure is more or less in place. Accordingly, the core of this thesis is concerned with the various discourses on movement present in a cycle (indeed, a system, a network) of novels dealing explicitly with that period, even if it is one which is written from the perspective of, and is of equal implicit relevance to, the early years of the Third Republic which followed it.⁴⁸ However, while

⁴⁵ Roland Barthes, 'Texte (théorie du)' (1973), in Roland Barthes, *Œuvres complètes*, 3 vols, ed. Éric Marty (Paris: Seuil, 1993-95), II (1994), 1677-89 (pp. 1683-84).

⁴⁶ The notion of the spider's web was a fairly common one for depicting the transport network, particularly the railway. Maxime du Camp, in his exhaustive account of the interconnected organs which constitute the body of Second-Empire Paris, and by extension France, enthuses about the railways in the following terms: 'Quand on regarde une carte de France, on semble voir une forte toile d'araignée dont le nœud est fixé à gauche et en haut; c'est là, en effet, la forme de notre réseau dont toutes les lignes convergent sur Paris; la solution de continuité est encore apparente sur Clermont-Ferrand, Aurillac et Mende, sur Gap et Digne, sur Bressuire et Napoléon-Vendée, vers Aurades et Mayenne; mais partout ailleurs les mailles du grand filet métallique se sèment, s'entre-croisent, portant avec elles la fécondation et la vie'. Maxime du Camp, *Paris ses organes ses fonctions et sa vie dans la seconde moitié du XIXe siècle*, 6 vols (Paris: Hachette, 1869-75), I (1869), 299-300.

⁴⁷ Chevrel, *Le Naturalisme*, p. 100.

⁴⁸ Émile Zola, *Les Rougon-Macquart. Histoire naturelle et sociale d'une famille sous le Second Empire*, ed. Henri Mitterand, 5 Vols (Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1960-67).

Zola's *Les Rougon-Macquart*, like its author, occupies a pivotal position within naturalism, it cannot be seen in isolation from a broader phenomenon, which goes beyond the borders of France, and beyond the nineteenth century. Chevrel suggests that naturalism can loosely be defined temporally as beginning in 1864 with the Goncourts' *Germinie Lacerteux*, and ending with the première of Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard* in 1904.⁴⁹ The geographical and temporal parameters of this study are narrower than that, at least as far as the principal literary texts and their place (France) and time of writing (roughly 1869-93) are concerned, but in terms of events covered, necessarily extend beyond the Second Empire. In any case, dates of works can only ever be superficial criteria for inclusion within a genre which is generically very problematic; as Chevrel argues, 'ce qui fait la particularité et l'originalité de ce système [naturalism], c'est d'abord le défi qu'il lance à la classification: s'agit-il d'un système littéraire ou, au contraire, d'un système *qui refuse de n'être que littéraire*?',⁵⁰

It is its participation in this refusal which warrants the inclusion of Flaubert's *L'Éducation sentimentale* (1869) as the focus for analysis in Chapter One of this thesis. Equally importantly, as a novel written towards the end of the Second Empire about that régime's political, cultural and ultimately behavioural genesis in the July Monarchy, it is highly significant to our remit in its depiction of the perceiving subject's apprehension of the phenomena of an emerging modernity as novelty, most notably in the area of the individual's perception and experience of movement. What this novelty belies, however, is the fact, arguably implicit in the novel, that the 'changing phenomenology of motion' in the 1840s was part of a series of processes in the way movement was represented and perceived which had begun many decades earlier (and which the perceiving subject had internalised), just as the modern transport infrastructure was the result of a transformation

⁴⁹ Chevrel, *Le Naturalisme*, p. 215.

⁵⁰ Chevrel, *Le Naturalisme*, p. 215, emphasis in original.

which had begun in the eighteenth century. Moreover, rapid movement was only one factor among many in transforming the subject's apprehension of the world. The chapter, centred on an analysis of the journey by steamboat depicted at the beginning of the novel, examines the text in relation to a range of discourses about movement, visual perception, modernity, and finally, the technological processes which made modern movement possible. Methodologically, as in the rest of the thesis, the approach is one which might be characterised by what Marion Schmid refers to as the 'confrontation' of texts, which are variously literary, scientific and visual. The specific context in which Schmid uses this term, that of the 'confrontation of preparatory and published documents in their dynamic interplay' in genetic criticism, is also relevant here, as the analysis (again, as elsewhere) draws in no small measure on manuscript material, in this case Flaubert's rough drafts for the novel's opening sequence.⁵¹ 'Tout texte est un *intertexte*', says Barthes, and manuscript extracts, for our purposes, are no exception, especially since they frequently provide the missing link between Flaubert's fiction and other texts, such as Baudelaire's *Le Peintre de la vie moderne*, also examined here in terms of its status as defining disquisition on modernity.⁵² Modernity is, after all, a prime focus of this study.

Intertextuality is an important feature of genetics, but it is also a key element of generics. *L'Éducation sentimentale*'s status within the canon of naturalist fiction is highly problematic, and so Chapter Two attempts to examine that status, and its implications for the evolution of naturalism as a genre, by way of intertextual comparison with Zola's *La Curée* (1871), focused on the way these two novels represent movement which, despite being horse-drawn, is no less modern than that of the steamboat or train. Starting from a comparison of the respective taxonomies of vehicles depicted in the memorable traffic jams

⁵¹ Marion Schmid, *Processes of Literary Creation. Flaubert and Proust* (Oxford: Legenda, 1998), p. 23.

⁵² Barthes, 'Texte (théorie du)', op. cit., p. 1683, emphasis in original.

in these novels, the analysis then considers taxonomy as a key representational resource in Zola's work, on the grounds that the correspondence between vehicles and social categories is only the tip of an iceberg of interrelationships between seemingly disparate elements of the Second Empire landscape, both physical and conceptual: public parks, the city in the process of Haussmannization, the bourgeois interior, heredity. The taxonomies underpinning the descriptions of these spaces and their contents, it would appear, are integrated into an organic fabric of appropriated discourses greater than the sum of its parts, at the heart of which lies a determinism, aesthetic as much as hereditary, for which naturalism has become a byword.

In Chapter Three, the focus remains on interrelationships, in this case between different 'organisms' whose functioning is founded on circulation. The eponymous department store of Zola's *Au Bonheur des Dames* (1883) is considered in relation to the different circulatory systems which emerged during the Second Empire. The functioning of the store as a circulatory machine is paralleled by the equally unproblematic functioning of Haussmann's Paris and of the wider commodity-based economy, to the extent that any one of these systems can be seen in terms of the others. What is distinctive about this novel's representations of 'organisme[s] en mouvement', to re-employ Chevrel's characterisation of the terms in which the world was perceived by naturalism, is precisely that they are functionally unproblematic. None of the different 'rouages' of each interconnected mechanism, either within the store, predicated on the smooth interaction of different departments, or without, in the context of the store's interaction with exterior networks to which there is no absolute exteriority, is subject to dysfunction. If there is an overarching system, it is a closed one: no spanner can enter the works. In this, the novel can be situated within a field of discourse which T.J. Clark identifies as denying the essential

‘incompleteness’ which characterised the redevelopment of Paris.⁵³ The chapter examines *Au Bonheur des Dames* in the light of observations by Clark and others about the history of Haussmannization, and in relation to other examples of euphoric discourse of a type identified by Philippe Hamon as ‘expositional’, in particular Haussmann’s personal reflections and Maxime du Camp’s monumental account of the Parisian organism.⁵⁴

The vision of untroubled completeness found in these texts and in Zola’s novel of the department store contrasts severely with the vision of dysfunction presented in his novel of ‘la haute galanterie parisienne’, *Nana* (1880). Chapter Four explores the various networks and organisms through which Zola’s anti-heroine moves, as high-class courtesan in the upper echelons of Second Empire society, as temporarily hard-up prostitute on the streets of Haussmann’s Paris, and as metaphorical ‘mouche couleur de soleil’ parasitically infecting the social body. The root cause of the fatal dysfunction of Second Empire society, culminating in the Franco-Prussian war, appears traceable to the ‘détraquement nerveux’ of Nana’s ‘sexe de femme’ identified in an article by Zola’s fictional journalist Fauchery. However, underlying this article and the wider metaphorical thrust of the novel, are a number of scientifically contradictory yet metaphorically complementary ideas which enjoyed wide currency in the nineteenth century. The text, along with less complex ‘romans de fille’ by the Goncourts and Huysmans, is thus examined in the light of nineteenth-century medical treatises on areas such as hysteria (variously understood as the movement of the migratory womb within the female –or, in a wider sense, social – body, or the result of sexual incontinence), and spontaneous ovulation and generation. This interpretative framework, informing the received wisdom figured by *Nana*’s narrative, must, however, be

⁵³ Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life*, p. 68.

⁵⁴ Baron Georges-Eugène Haussmann, *Mémoires*, 3 Vols (Paris: Victor Havard, 1890-93); Du Camp, *Paris* (see n. 46 above); see Philippe Hamon, ‘Le Livre comme Exposition’, in *Expositions. Littérature et Architecture au XIXe siècle* (Paris: Corti, 1989), pp. 95-122.

considered against the background of another organic model which enjoys an understated yet crucial presence in the text. This is the Bernardian *circulus vital*, co-opted theoretically by Zola as *circulus social* in *Le Roman expérimental* and arguably put into practice in *Nana*. Taking this into account, a reading of the novel is possible whereby the disintegration of Second Empire society can be seen in terms of an intra-organic *détraquement* which cannot simply be attributed to an extra-organic parasitical scapegoat, linked with female sexuality, disturbing the workings of an otherwise smoothly functioning social body. There are grounds for supposing that there is no actual causal link between Nana and the corruption of the social organism; rather, the society depicted in Zola's novel, as the victim of a 'hysterical' epidemic leading to its self-destruction, is so convinced of its self-sufficient integrity that it is reluctant to accept any diagnosis identifying the cause of its symptoms within the body.

In similar vein, Jacques Lantier, the protagonist of *La Bête humaine*, is reluctant to accept that his locomotive's dysfunction – which parallels his own psychological 'degeneracy' – has anything to do with the very technological basis on which it is able to move, namely obedience to the laws of thermodynamics. David Baguley has famously characterised naturalist fiction as being ultimately expressive of an 'entropic vision'.⁵⁵ What tends to characterise the discourse of the bourgeois world which naturalist fiction depicts, on the other hand, might rather be termed an 'anti-entropic vision'. That is to say, bourgeois industrial society believes itself to be immortal, self-sufficient, infinitely self-sustainable. That this optimism was often naïve or misplaced is widely accepted without much controversy. Such optimism, however, was very often not just a matter of simple naïveté, but one of profound self-deception, characterised by the search for external causes

⁵⁵ Baguley, *Naturalist Fiction. The Entropic Vision*.

for a system's or organism's internally generated dysfunction. This self-deception took many forms, but in very many cases it can be likened to the state of being convinced of the existence of perpetual motion while knowing it to be impossible. In Chapter Five, this denial of entropy is considered in its most literal sense: an investigation is undertaken of the coalescence of the protagonist's psyche with the (narratorially anti-entropic, but on the textual scale, entropic) functioning of the steam locomotive, incorporating Gilles Deleuze's reading of the Freudian Death Instinct in its manifestation in Zola's novel, and Michel Serres's critical insights informed by the laws of thermodynamics.⁵⁶ However, this coalescence must also be seen in the light of the interconnected anthropomorphisation and simultaneous bestialisation of machines which became culturally pervasive over the course of the nineteenth century, and which remained problematically meshed with the Cartesian dualism which the new scientific, technological and philosophical dispensation had supposedly displaced. Accordingly, the 'thermodynamic' analysis is preceded by a survey of nineteenth-century texts by Hugo, Vigny, Du Camp, Claretie and Huysmans, in which locomotives are represented in animal and human terms, often with sexual overtones. These texts, with the optimistic exception of Du Camp, express the deep unease about the philosophical and social implications of the rise of the locomotive and its relationship to humanity underlying the veneer of nineteenth-century euphoria.

However, the similarity is striking between the terms in which both pessimistic and euphoric views are voiced. This apparent paradox can be seen in terms of a wider discourse of received wisdom about railway travel, which expressed fears about loss of control in the same moment of proclaiming modern industrial society's invincibility. If the first chapter of

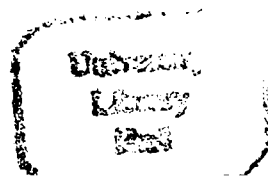
⁵⁶ Gilles Deleuze, 'Zola et la fêlure', in *Logique du Sens* (1969), repr. in Zola, *La Bête humaine* (Paris: Gallimard, édition Folio, 1977), pp. 7-24; Michel Serres, *Feux et signaux de brume. Zola* (Paris: Grasset et Fasquelle, 1975).

this study examined the perception by the individual of new forms of movement apprehended in terms of their novelty, the final chapter explores the experience of mass transit by the travelling public at a time when it had become relatively banal (roughly speaking, the 1880s). Despite this banality, a tendency to exaggerate both the negative and positive aspects of modern travel was still highly pervasive. Chapter Six, therefore, centred on analysis of the short fiction and novels of Maupassant depicting travel by mechanical means (along with two stories by Marcel Schwob), explores this tendency in terms of the Barthesian notion of the *Doxa*, as well as with reference to texts by Barthes specifically about Maupassant and the distinction between short and novel fictional forms, and about the preoccupations of the petite bourgeoisie as reflected in *faits divers* and so on.⁵⁷ The analysis necessarily involves consideration of narrative strategies: the short form is particularly suited to the ironisation of the railway carriage as locus of fears of catastrophe, violence, and sexual activity both uninvited and consensual; the novel form, on the other hand, allows for more extensive 'organic' examination of the late-nineteenth-century assimilation of a variety of often contradictory views on technological progress. Crucial to a comprehensive account of the implications of all these narratives is an implicit acceptance of the death of the author, or more simply, a distinction between narrative and text, perhaps best understood in Genette's terms of reference.⁵⁸

This latter distinction is one which is applied throughout the thesis. It is particularly appropriate to naturalist fiction, precisely because we are dealing here with a highly problematic genre, if genre it can be designated, which appropriates and represents in so

⁵⁷ 'La *Doxa* (mot qui va revenir souvent), c'est l'Opinion publique, l'Esprit majoritaire, le Consensus petit-bourgeois, la Voix du Naturel, la Violence du Préjugé.' Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes* (1975), in Barthes, *Œuvres complètes*, op. cit., III (1995), 79-250 (p. 130).

⁵⁸ I use here the terms 'narrative' and 'text' in a sense roughly analagous to that of the Genettian categories of 'narration' and 'récit'. See Gérard Genette, *Figures III* (Paris: Seuil, 1972), pp. 71-72. See also Roland Barthes, 'La mort de l'auteur' (1968), in *Œuvres complètes*, op. cit., II (1994), 491-95.



often unnoticeably unadulterated form the discourses which it subverts or calls into question, whether these be literary (most notably, the Realism of which it is frequently misunderstood as being an atrophied offshoot), scientific, sociological or philosophical. Naturalist fiction, considered organically, cannot be separated from external influences, even though it is very often crafted in such a way as to appear as if it were. It is precisely because of this that it is able to undermine the master discourse of the nineteenth century which perceived the various organs of the modern world as being complete, integral systems to which externality could only mean dysfunction, which in turn was identified by naturalism as inhabiting these systems' very workings. What this thesis seeks to explore is that discourse's strongest affirmation in its proclamation of the late nineteenth century as an age of unstoppable perpetual movement, and its subjection to scrutiny by naturalism. What it seeks to affirm is the centrality of movement and systems of movement, as part of 'le grand transit moderne', to the evolution of mimetic representation.

Chapter One

A Complex Kind of Training: *L'Éducation sentimentale*, Modernity and the Changing Phenomenology of Motion

Technology in the nineteenth century, in Walter Benjamin's formulation, 'subjected the human sensorium to a complex kind of training'.¹ Of particular complexity was the human subject's experience of (and adjustment to) the new forms of mechanized movement made possible by that technology. The traveller was first of all subject to unprecedented speeds, often leading to a feeling of being a passive projectile, indeed to a loss of control of the senses.² The body experienced vibrations rooted in the mechanical functioning of the means of transport, rather than the jolts of previous forms of travel, rooted in direct contact with the immediate landscape. And perhaps the most important result of this removal of travel from the landscape (in addition to the loss of the sounds and smells of coach travel) was that the subject's visual perceptions were seriously affected. According to Wolfgang Schivelbusch, 'the change effected in the traveler's relationship to the landscape becomes most evident in relation to his sense of sight: visual perception is diminished by velocity'.³ However, the way in which the human subject perceived phenomena was undergoing transformation every bit as revolutionary as that undergone by the way in which people and objects moved. Modes of perception did not change solely because of responses to technology and to the experiences to which the individual was subjected; unprecedentedly

¹ Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire. A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism* (London: NLB, 1973), p. 132.

² See Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey. Trains and Travel in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980), p. 58.

³ Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey*, p. 59.

rapid movement did not afford a new perception of the world independently of other transformations. There was a much bigger picture, in which a process of reorganization of discursive and social practices had been occurring since the Renaissance. Indeed, technology itself was informed by a fundamental reorganization of the way in which the world was perceived.

The way in which the world was represented by fiction was inevitably implicated in this reorganization. Fictional representation of movement in particular, equally inevitably, is especially fruitful in its depiction of how the human subject adjusts to an extremely acute and complex manifestation of the transformation of the experience of the world. Fiction is all the richer when the very means it employs to depict the difficulties of this problematic adjustment participate in the reconfiguration of perception informing it. In its exploration of the 'changing phenomenology of motion' in the nineteenth century, therefore, this chapter takes as its main focus an innovative and radical novel which may be regarded as pivotal in its narrative approach to the literary protagonist's perception of the world, *L'Éducation sentimentale*, not least in its highly problematic depiction of the subject's experience of movement. One of the most striking features of the novel's narration, according to D.A. Williams, is the close attention accorded to the inner life of the protagonist, Frédéric Moreau.

Characteristically, the narrator adopts the point of view of Frédéric, conveying his subjective impressions of people and places rather than a potentially more reliable narratorial view. The extensive insight we are granted into Frédéric's perceptions inevitably stands in the way of a more traditional presentation which would have involved looking *at* rather than *with* him and his being an object of investigation rather than a subject with whose consciousness we coincide. More critically, everything that falls within the perceptual field of the protagonist tends to dissolve or be tinged with uncertainty.⁴

⁴ D.A. Williams, 'The Hidden Life at Its Source'. *A Study of Flaubert's L'Éducation sentimentale* (Hull: Hull University Press, 1987), p. 4, emphasis in original.

Importantly, in its subversion of traditional narrative modes, the novel constantly alludes to them, as if to suggest that previous ways of perceiving the world pervade the perceptual landscape. Hence the uncertainty. Again, this is part of the depiction of the difficulties associated with the fundamental readjustment required by modernity. One of the protagonist's characteristics is a tendency to persist in wishing to perceive the world in terms of previous perceptual and representational configurations. But perhaps most interesting in the present context of new forms of movement, especially by mechanized means, is the way in which the interiority of the protagonist is affected not only by the visual impact of movement, but also by the technological means by which this movement comes about. There are therefore two main elements to this chapter's investigation of the phenomenological impact of modern movement. Firstly, there is a consideration of the transformation of specifically visual perception, not by transport *per se*, but by a much wider framework of social and technological circumstances into which the experience of transport, like the experience of many other modern phenomena, is integrated. These changing circumstances, often unrecognized by the subject, are just as central to the focus of the second chief line of enquiry, that of the link between the subject's apprehension of the world and the actual technological processes which make mechanised movement possible. What the 'optical' and 'thermodynamic' readings of Flaubert's depiction of Frédéric's experience of modernity have in common is the premise that this experience is constantly assimilated in terms of idealised 'pre-modern' ways of seeing the world.

According to the art historian Jonathan Crary, the question of visual perception is a highly problematic one, since rather a lot of emphasis has been placed on representational forms rather than on the observing subject, whose status was changing as much as the world around him or her. Conventional histories of visuality identify a rupture between Classical and Modern forms of representation in the late nineteenth century, coinciding

with the advent of Impressionism.⁵ The situation of this rupture with Impressionism depends on regarding mimetic codes, photography in particular, as essentially unchanging in their 'immediate' status. Everything apart from Impressionist painting remains within the structures of 'realism'. 'Modernism is thus presented as the appearance of the new for an observer who remains perpetually the same, or whose historical status is never interrogated'.⁶

The example of photography is particularly instructive, since it was presented as having evolved unproblematically from the camera obscura: that is, what photography represented was exactly as it appeared in the photographic image. According to Crary, 'from the late 1500s to the end of the 1700s, the structural and optical principles of the camera obscura coalesced into a dominant paradigm through which was described the status and possibilities of an observer'.⁷ Within this paradigm, the camera became 'a metaphor for the most rational possibilities of a perceiver within the increasingly dynamic disorder of the world'.⁸ Furthermore, movement and time could be seen and experienced, but never actually represented. However, one of the chief features of photography distinguishing it from the camera obscura was precisely that it was a form of representation which necessarily took account of the passing of time. Because, as Shelley Rice has pointed out, 'the early camera apparatus recorded only what *endured*', and thus recorded only fleeting images of what was mobile or transient, temporality became a crucial factor in representation. Through the introduction of time, the fixed became distinguishable from the mobile.⁹ But photography itself was just one of many new forms of representation which

⁵ Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer. On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990), p. 3.

⁶ Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, pp. 4-5.

⁷ Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, p. 27.

⁸ Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, p. 53.

⁹ Shelley Rice, *Parisian Views* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997), p.7, emphasis in original.

were part of the ‘uprooting of vision from the stable and fixed relations incarnated in the camera obscura’, which, according to Crary, occurred principally in the period between 1810 and 1840, rather than in the 1860s and 1870s.¹⁰ Late nineteenth-century painting, or indeed representation *per se*, was not the primary element in the reshaping of perception; rather, it was in the early nineteenth century that the objective ground of visual truth constituted by the camera obscura was abolished. Central to this abolition was investigation of the persistence of vision over time. According to Crary:

The virtual instantaneity of optical transmission [...] was an unquestioned foundation of classical optics and theories of perception from Aristotle to Locke. And the simultaneity of the camera obscura image with its exterior object was never questioned. But as observation is increasingly tied to the body in the early nineteenth century, temporality and vision become inseparable. The shifting processes of one’s own subjectivity experienced in time became synonymous with the act of seeing, dissolving the Cartesian ideal of an observer completely focused on an object.¹¹

Perception began to be situated within ‘an unfolding that [was] temporal and historical’, and various means of investigating this unfolding were developed. These could be situated in two main areas of enquiry. In the late eighteenth century, the retina was the focus of investigation. Its changing condition provided clues to the nature of persisting afterimages. In the early nineteenth century, however, the focus shifted from the eye itself to the constantly changing relationship between the eye and what it observed:

Beginning in the mid-1820s, the experimental study of afterimages led to the invention of a number of related optical devices and techniques. Initially they were for purposes of scientific observation but were quickly converted into forms of popular entertainment. Linking them all was the notion that perception was not instantaneous, and the notion of a disjunction between eye and object. Research on afterimages had suggested that some form of blending or fusion occurred when sensations were perceived in quick succession, and thus the duration involved in seeing allowed its modification and control.¹²

¹⁰ Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, p. 14.

¹¹ Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, p. 98.

¹² Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, p. 104.

Central to the various devices invented to explore the changing relationship between eye and object was movement. Such devices which relied on movement included the phenakistiscope and the diorama. The former, invented by Joseph Plateau, exploited movement and the persistence of vision to create the image of movement.¹³ In a thesis submitted in 1829, Plateau described how, if several objects differing sequentially in terms of form and position were presented one after the other to the eye in brief intervals and close together, the impressions they produced on the retina would blend together without confusion and one would believe that a single object was gradually changing form and position.¹⁴ The diorama, developed by Louis Daguerre in the early 1820s, was based on ‘the incorporation of an *immobile* observer into a mechanical apparatus and a subjection to a predesigned temporal unfolding of optical experience’.¹⁵ As its name suggests, the diorama alluded to the panorama, which had been around since the 1790s. It consisted of a static cylindrical picture, in relation to which the observer was granted a certain ambulatory capacity, so that his or her ‘roving eye determined the visual experience’.¹⁶ The autonomy granted the observer by the panorama, which ‘broke with the localized point of view of perspective painting or the camera obscura’ was removed by the diorama.¹⁷ Its effect on

¹³ The phenakistiscope was a device, usually hand-held, which ‘consisted of a single disc, divided into [...] equal segments, each of which contained a small slitted opening and a figure, representing one position in a sequence of movement. The side with figures drawn on it was faced toward a mirror while the viewer stayed immobile as the disc turned. When an opening passed in front of the eye, it allowed one to see the figure on the disc very briefly. The same effect occurs with each of the slits. Because of retinal persistence, a series of images results that appear to be in continuous motion before the eye’. Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, p. 109. Baudelaire describes the workings of the phenakistiscope in *Morale du Joujou* (1853-57; first publ. 1868 in *Curiosités Esthétiques*), in *Œuvres*, op. cit., pp. 677-78.

¹⁴ Joseph Plateau, *Dissertation sur quelques propriétés des impressions*, Liège, 1829, cited in Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, pp. 108-09.

¹⁵ Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, pp. 112-13, emphasis in original.

¹⁶ Rice, *Parisian Views*, p. 127. According to Rice, the term ‘panorama’ was first coined in London around 1792, deriving from the Greek pan (all) and horama (to see). Very specifically, it consisted of a cylindrical picture 10-20 metres in diameter, 10-14 metres in height and 140 metres long. The meaning of the term changed during the nineteenth century ‘to include any picture or series of pictures, big or small, that provided an overall view or a survey of its subject’ (p. 129).

¹⁷ Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, p. 113.

subjectivity was, as Rice puts it, that ‘point of view became not an ideal position, but one that incorporated the temporality of the situation, involuntary movements dictated by the rhythm of technology’.¹⁸

Leaving aside such devices, however, both eye and object could move rapidly in relation to each other in a way in which they had never been able to before. The ‘changing phenomenology of motion’ was not simply something identified by scientific investigation, but was rooted in the conditions of the modern world brought about by technology. New findings, and new methods of investigation of perception resulted from ‘the often accidental observation of new forms of movement, in particular mechanized wheels moving at high speeds’.¹⁹ For example, the mathematician Peter Mark Roget (better known as the author of the first Thesaurus), on observing train wheels through the bars of a fence, noticed that the spokes appeared either motionless or to be turning backwards. This suggested that the location of an observer in relation to a screen positioned between himself and a moving object could exploit the durational properties of retinal afterimages.²⁰ The study of afterimages, previously the static hobby of gentleman amateur scientists, became bound up with new observational possibilities afforded by rapid motion. According to Crary, ‘like the study of afterimages, new experiences of machine movement disclosed an increasing divergence between appearances and their external causes’.²¹ This divergence, it might be argued, is a central feature of the Flaubertian project, and indeed, as will be discussed below, many of the new ways of seeing which became possible with rapid movement and with the contemporaneous development of optical devices based on the

¹⁸ Rice, *Parisian Views*, p. 188.

¹⁹ Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, p. 111.

²⁰ Peter Mark Roget, ‘Explanation of an optical deception in the appearance of the spokes of a wheel seen through vertical apertures’, *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*, 115 (1825), cited in Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, p. 106.

²¹ Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, p. 112.

premise that vision was essentially a mobile concept, can be discerned in the ultimate fictional expression of that divergence, *L'Éducation sentimentale*. If the mimetic project can be likened, as in Stendhal, to a moving optical device, then Flaubert's novel is one in which mimetic representation, and the fictional examination of it, go far beyond the mirror travelling along a road.²² Indeed, the means employed by *L'Éducation sentimentale* to represent reality can be likened to the new optical devices described above.

L'Éducation sentimentale may well be a novel about the paralysis and ineffectiveness of an entire generation, but the inertia which it describes is bound up, paradoxically, with motion. There is a constant tension between autonomy and self-imposed constraint, and correspondingly, between stasis and movement. According to Yvan Leclerc, if it is a novel of stasis, 'il est aussi le livre du mouvement perpétuel, des mouvements de la foule, de la locomotion. Il se distingue surtout par une inversion de l'inerte et de l'animé'.²³ This inversion is especially apparent in the way the novel's persistently underachieving protagonist, Frédéric Moreau, apprehends the world. Frédéric everywhere has the opportunity to exercise his autonomy, but chooses to abnegate it in favour of inaction, as an observer as much as in any other capacity. For Leclerc:

[Frédéric] est l'observateur arrêté qui regarde le spectacle changeant du monde [...]. Pourtant, Frédéric est le plus souvent en marche. Même le corps figé, c'est un spectateur emporté par la course du moyen de locomotion où il a pris place (bateau, voitures, train). Mais, parce qu'il est perçu par un sujet fixe ou lui-même mobile, le mouvement donne lieu à des effets en trompe-l'œil de changements de vitesse ou d'inversion.²⁴

²² Stendhal, *Le Rouge et le Noir* (Paris: Livre de Poche, 1958): 'Un roman: c'est un miroir qu'on promène le long du chemin' (attributed to Saint-Réal, p. 82); 'Eh, monsieur, un roman est un miroir qui se promène sur une grande route' (p. 363). Unlike Stendhal's mirror, which is defended as being morally independent of the 'fange' which it reflects, the new optical devices are implicated in the technological society which has produced them, embedded, as it were, in 'la fange du macadam', as evoked by Baudelaire in *Perte d'Auréole*, in *Œuvres*, ed. Y.-G. Le Dantec (Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1951), pp. 343-44. In Baudelaire's prose poem, desanctifying immersion of the artist's aesthetic sensibilities in the real world of capitalist production provides the key to authentic modern representation.

²³ Yvan Leclerc, *Gustave Flaubert. 'L'Éducation sentimentale'* (Paris: PUF, 1997), p. 80.

²⁴ Leclerc, *Gustave Flaubert. 'L'Éducation sentimentale'*, p. 81.

These effects are in evidence from the famous *incipit* onwards; from the vantage point of the *Ville-de-Montereau*, the vessel taking Frédéric back to Nogent-sur-Seine ‘par la route la plus longue’, it is the landscape rather than any observer which appears to be moving:

Enfin le navire partit; et les deux berges, peuplées de magasins, de chantiers et d’usines, filèrent comme deux larges rubans que l’on déroule.²⁵

Although the boat is clearly moving, the experience of any observer (none being yet specified) is like that of the diorama, in which the observer was an immobile component of the mechanism. As far as the narrative is concerned, the landscape does not merely appear to move, but is simply moving in an absolute sense.²⁶ Henri Mitterand identifies in relation to this episode ‘la présence supposée d’un témoin, d’un œil, d’un foyer d’ocularisation, qui n’est ni le narrateur, ni l’un des personnages immédiatement mentionnés: un regard anonyme, implicite. Et mobile’. The vision of this ‘tiers caché’, having discerned first the boat, and then the activity occurring on it prior to departure, then merges with that of Frédéric when he is identified, so that ‘inverted’ movement is represented initially by the narrative as actually happening, rather than as merely being perceived.²⁷

What this and the novel’s numerous subsequent instances of inversion of the inert and the mobile may indicate is perhaps rather more than simply the fundamental paralysis and inconsequentiality of the people and events in Flaubert’s fictional world. In the light of the interrelatedness of vision and movement described earlier, it could be argued that what

²⁵ Gustave Flaubert, *L’Éducation sentimentale. Histoire d’un jeune homme*, ed. P. M. Wetherill (Paris: Garnier, 1984), p. 3. All further references to this edition indicated by page number in the text.

²⁶ Bibliothèque Nationale, Nouvelles acquisitions françaises, 17599, f° 7: ‘Enfin le navire partit, [passa sous des ponts] [*<illisible>*] *<passa sous des ponts>* – et les deux berges semblèrent filer comme deux larges rubans que l’on déroule’. Any notion of the mere appearance of movement is subsequently expunged, as is any movement on the part of the boat other than instantaneous departure, itself a recurring motif in the novel. In this and subsequent references to the *avant-texte*, [...] indicates a deletion from, and <...> containing text in italics, an addition to, the first manuscript version.

²⁷ Henri Mitterand, *L’Illusion réaliste* (Paris: Seuil, 1994), pp. 40-41.

is actually being suggested by the novel is that it is the specifically modern quality of the movement being described which informs the radically new way in which the individual subject is depicted as perceiving the world. In this sense, we are dealing with ‘*trompe-l’œil*’ as more than a mere turn of phrase. Rather, there are indications in the way movement and its phenomenological perception are represented and perceived in *L’Éducation sentimentale* that the transformation of vision and the implications of the modernity of which it is a part have been assimilated by fiction. That is to say, Flaubert’s novel, revolutionary as it is for the 1860s in its representation of vision and movement, displays a subtle awareness that a new visual frame of reference is already in place and ready for use by the time the *Ville-de-Montereau* leaves Paris on 15 September 1840, and that modern movement is inextricably linked with it. Frédéric Moreau, accordingly, then, is an observer who perceives movement and the world in general in the way he does because he is ‘un jeune homme de dix-huit ans’ who is part of the first generation to have grown up within the period of development of this perceptual paradigm. His eye, as it were, has been ‘trained’ in the application of movement to the persistence of vision, so that contemplation as part of a mobile relationship between observer and observed can produce effects of inversion, among others. It is made clear on first mention of Frédéric (before he is named), that he is ‘immobile’, even though the boat has already begun to move. His activity is described thus: ‘A travers le brouillard, il contemplait des clochers, des édifices dont il ne savait pas les noms’. That is to say, he is observing, over a lapse of time, and through an intermediate screen (of fog), a number of distinct if unrecognized objects. Then, through ‘un dernier coup d’œil’, a conscious action of the eye, he takes in a series of known objects (‘l’île Saint-Louis, la Cité, Notre-Dame’). The effect of this is that the disparate objects which he has observed and contemplated blend into a mobile unity (‘Paris disparaissant’). This would seem to be consistent with Roget’s conclusions about the exploitation of

relative mobility and retinal afterimages through the use of screens.²⁸ What is happening here also corresponds to Plateau's theories on the persistence of vision. However, perhaps the most significant parallel of all is that between the steamboat-observer-landscape ensemble and the diorama. The 'diorama effect' is even more striking when Frédéric travels by train to Creil in Part II, Chapter 3 of the novel. Again, he is an observer who, although actually moving, is immobile relative to the mechanical apparatus in which he is situated. There is thus a tension which results in both a panoramic effect and a diorama-type experience. On the one hand, there is the wide survey of the landscape afforded to the mobile observer, while to the immobile one, a mere component of the technological apparatus of the railway considered as an infrastructural ensemble, the apparent artificiality of the surroundings brought into motion by the experience is highlighted:

A droite et à gauche, des plaines vertes s'étendaient; le convoi roulait; les maisonnettes des stations glissaient comme des décors [...].

(p. 192)

For Bernard Masson, 'ce glissement fondamental, c'est bien sûr, la marche du bateau sur la Seine qui en est le modèle initial; mais, par contagion, il a servi à régler le mouvement de bien d'autres véhicules dans le roman. Il y a, du voyage en bateau aux voyages à pied, en voiture ou en chemin de fer, une continuité essentielle, qui est la continuité liquide'.²⁹

While this continuity is not in doubt, what distinguishes the *Ville-de-Montereau* from the

²⁸ Later in the opening chapter, moods or emotions become almost tangible physical entities, and can function as 'screens' to create effects of inversion of mobility. For example: 'l'ennui, vaguement répandu, semblait alanguir la marche du bateau et rendre l'aspect des voyageurs plus insignifiant encore' (p. 5). And in the manuscript: 'Cependant le <Le> plaisir tout nouveau d'une excursion maritime animait ces visages un peu blêmes, naturellement' (B.N., N.a.f., 17599, f° 7).

²⁹ Bernard Masson, 'L'Eau et les rêves dans *l'Éducation sentimentale*', *Europe*, 47 (1969), 82-101, repr. in Bernard Masson, *Lectures de l'imaginaire* (Paris: PUF, 1993), pp. 182-206 (p. 196). This 'notation de glissement' recurs at the race meeting in the Champ de mars ('De loin, leur vitesse n'avait pas l'air excessive; [...] ils semblaient même se ralentir et ne plus avancer que par une sorte de glissement' (pp. 206-07)) and later when Frédéric and Rosanette are at Fontainebleau ('La voiture glissait comme un traîneau sur le gazon' (p. 325)).

other modes of conveyance where this type of *glissement* occurs, and sets it up as a model for the way in which the observer apprehends the world throughout the novel, is the conjunction of modern technology and new patterns of vision with public spectacle and commercial exploitation. The experience of the technologically new has the capacity to engender and suggest artistic and representational effort, which appear to gush forth like liquid; and indeed, liquid itself automatically gushes forth into glasses without any apparent agency:

Le plaisir tout nouveau d'une excursion maritime facilitait les épanchements. Déjà les farceurs commençaient leurs plaisanteries. Beaucoup chantaient. On était gai. Il se versait des petits verres.³⁰

The 'optique flaubertienne' then switches its attention to Frédéric, who, we can presume, is as subject to this 'plaisir tout nouveau' and its capacity to generate thoughts of artistic activity, or at least contemplation of it, as anyone else on the boat:

Frédéric pensait à la chambre qu'il occuperait là-bas, au plan d'un drame, à des sujets de tableaux, à des passions futures. Il trouvait que le bonheur mérité par l'excellence de son âme tardait à venir.

(p. 4)³¹

Frédéric's subjection to a diorama-like experience seems here to have extended to his life and intended works. The world itself would appear to be a diorama, in which artistic and romantic achievement and success are simply scenery which move towards and ultimately past him, without requiring him to move or expend any energy, unlike, say, Balzac's Rastignac, who actively moves through the 'panoramic' world of *La Comédie humaine* in

³⁰ cf. n. 28 above.

³¹ Mitterand's term. '[L']optique flaubertienne' dénote une compétence originale, inédite, dans le traitement narratif du champ de vision, ainsi que de la spatialisation des postures et des déplacements: personnage *in situ*, personnage *in motu*'. Mitterand, *L'Illusion réaliste*, p. 44.

order to achieve success. However, Frédéric's problem may lie in the fact that his artistic and creative 'soul' lies at a remove from his eyes. That is, mimetic representation of the world is no longer really possible; any representation must be abstracted through one optical device or another, so that phenomena are perceived in terms of second-hand images. This is particularly true of how he perceives Paris. In the final version of this scene, his thinking about 'là-bas' and about what he dreams of doing there is isolated at the beginning of a paragraph, and not attributed to any particular motivation or stimulus, unless we can contextualise it among the 'épanchements' facilitated by the novelty of modern movement which the text has just identified. However, in several manuscript drafts, it is clear that Frédéric's dreams are provoked by the interaction of vision and movement. In one version, for example, we have a link between his optical perception, the moving *décors* of the banks, the liquid mobility caused by the boat's movement, and his drift into ambitious reverie:

Le regard perdu dans le sillage du bateau – en suivant de l'œil. les deux [rives] <illisible> parallèles qui se formaient à l'avant <de la proue> se prolongeaient jusqu'aux deux rivages où un [sillon] <tourbillon> d'écume les [suivait] <courait> parallèlement – il s'abandonnait [à ses projets] à la foule de ses pensées.³²

The problematic relationship between the eye and the effects of movement is at the heart of his contemplation of his artistic ambitions. And indeed, Frédéric's problem is perhaps that he merely contemplates things rather than actually seeing them, while yet mistaking contemplation for sight. In a later version, in which lowly 'bateau' is elevated to ironically

³² B.N., N.a.f., 17599, f° 15v. The mobile contingency of the wake of the boat with the banks of the river is retained in the final version, but not in relation to Frédéric's plans, and situated at a later stage in the chapter; it is possibly attributable to the effect of the light on the water: 'Le soleil dardait d'aplomb, en faisant reluire les gabillots de fer autour des mâts, les plaques du bastingage et la surface de l'eau; elle se coupait à la proue en deux sillons, qui se déroulaient jusqu'au bord des prairies' (p. 5). In the 1869 edition, the surface of the water is 'immobile'. See p. 510, n. 5d.

grander ‘navire’, his vision is made more active, if still aimless:

Le regard perdu <fini> <errant> dans le sillage du [bateau] <navire>, il songeait à la chambre qu’il habiterait [<occuperait>] [à Paris], à un drame qu’il voulait faire, à des sujets de tableaux, à des aventures [probables] <possibles> [au monde entier].³³

This almost explicit relationship between vision, movement through liquid, and artistic creation is subsequently removed, but the implicit link between liquidity, the novelty of a mechanized mobile experience and creative ambition remains. Of Paris itself, the site of Frédéric’s intended exploits, the final version of the episode relates only that Frédéric has spent the night there, and is compensating for not being able to stay there longer ‘en regagnant sa province par la route la plus longue’ (p. 3).³⁴

What other rough drafts suggest, however, is that the choice and experience of this deliberately slow (yet modern and mechanized) means of returning home (and simultaneously of observing the world) may be intimately connected with new patterns of vision and movement in the city, in place long before Haussmann transformed its thoroughfares. Indeed, we might regard the choice of ‘la route la plus longue’ as compensation by one form of modern movement for others. Previous versions of this passage suggest that what Frédéric has been engaged in (and unable to prolong: hence his regret at leaving the capital in the final version) is *flânerie*:

Revenu la veille au soir <à la nuit tombante>, il avait alors pour la première fois de sa vie foulé l’asphalte du boulevard.

Il s’était promené longtemps, devant les vitrines des boutiques, dans plusieurs passages, jusqu’au fond des ruelles obscures. Aucun {sic} [désillusion] <déception> ne lui était venue [...].³⁵

³³ B.N., N.a.f., 17599, f° 5v. Another version (B.N., N.a.f., 17599, f° 21) perhaps foreshadows Frédéric’s subsequent contemplation of suicide: ‘Le regard noyé dans le sillage du navire, il songeait à la chambre qu’il habiterait là-bas’.

³⁴ cf. B.N., N.a.f., 17599, f° 8: ‘Sa mère, par le moyen le plus direct, l’avait envoyé au Havre, voir un oncle [...]’. Here, the principle on which authority has sent him out into the world to make (or at least to collect) his fortune would appear to be that of ‘la ligne droite’.

³⁵ B.N., N.a.f., 17599, f° 2v.

It is clear that his experience as a *flâneur*, however, is not an entirely authentic one; Frédéric is merely playing the part of the *flâneur*, basing his wanderings on what he has read about life in the city, as another extract confirms:

Aucune <des> illusions [n'était tombée] de toutes celles qui s'était faites d'après les [ardents] tableaux de la littérature contemporaine. Entrevue aux feux du gaz et dans l'atmosphère d'un soir d'été, la grande ville <en marge: avec son [illisible] de travail et de plaisir la confusion de ses rues le tapage de ses voix> [la confusion de ses rues] <la confusion de ses rues>, son tumulte, [les mille sonorités] <la voix> de sa foule, <son tapage de voitures>, ses femmes errantes, ses théâtres éclairés [illisible] [tous les allèchements offerts dans les regards que l'on croise le rayonnement de ses boutiques] tous ses rayonnements, et ses allèchements <tous ses mystères>, lui avait paru A un pays féérique, une capitale [surhumaine] <extrahumaine> où le marteau des Cyclopes s'alterne avec le chant des Syrènes.³⁶

Persistent visions from Frédéric's previous reading combine with movement against a haze of gaslight to produce a culturally distorted fairytale version of the city. Again, the effect is one of a unity brought into being from several disparate elements. The imagery of the Sirens seems to suggest the idea of the subject being tempted and drawn against his will towards a point of convergence, so that movement does not require any real action on his part. The irony is that Frédéric, unlike Odysseus, is not tied to a mast, and is free to respond to whatever Siren beckons; rather, he is tied to the mast of his own passivity, and is ineffective even in his initial response to the Siren actually present on the boat, but who may as well be on some faraway island. Cyclopean repetition is present also on the *Ville-de-Montereau*, in that confusion, 'tapage' and 'tumulte'(p. 3) are an essential part of the traveller's experience, which becomes a vicarious form of *flânerie*, with elements of the city transplanted to the vessel.

Most notable among these is the crowd. In one of the most famous, perhaps defining, disquisitions on *flânerie* (and indeed on the modernity which it emblemizes),

³⁶ B.N., N.a.f., 17599, f° 11v. The 'A' indicates an intended insertion point for additional material.

Baudelaire's *Le Peintre de la vie moderne*, the *flâneur*'s relationship to the crowd is identified as being indissociable from his experience of movement:

La foule est son domaine, comme l'air est celui de l'oiseau, comme l'eau celui du poisson. Sa passion et sa profession, c'est *d'épouser la foule*. Pour le parfait flâneur, pour l'observateur passionné, c'est une immense jouissance que d'élire domicile dans le nombre, dans l'ondoyant, dans le mouvement, dans le fugitif et l'infini.³⁷

This does not quite correspond with Frédéric's experience, but with his (subsequently dissipated and ultimately unfulfilled) artistic ambition: Baudelaire's *flâneur* is an artist, whereas Frédéric vainly aspires to be one. He is always at a remove from what he is observing; because of the vanity which leads him to believe he is at the centre of the world he experiences, he cannot perceive his own movement other than in terms of the apparent movement of his surroundings. This vanity underpins his ineffectuality, demonstrated at another key stage in the novel, when Frédéric shows himself to be on the fringes of things, rather than at their centre: during the events of 1848, he remains stationary, utterly detached from those around him, neither part of the crowd nor of the movement in which it is caught up. Indeed, he is divorced from rather than married to the crowd; any sense that he is at one with it is always mediated by a refracting phenomenological prism (*'comme si le cœur de l'humanité tout entière avait battu dans sa poitrine'* (p. 296)).³⁸

³⁷ Charles Baudelaire, *Le Peintre de la vie moderne* (1859-60), in *Œuvres*, op. cit., pp. 873-912 (p. 881, emphasis in original). On the relationship between vision, fluidity and the city, consider the following: 'Et il part! et il regarde couler le fleuve de la vitalité, si majestueux et si brillant. Il admire l'éternelle beauté et l'étonnante harmonie de la vie dans les capitales' (ibid., p. 882).

³⁸ Emphasis added. To take one more example from part III, chapter 1: 'Les tambours battaient la charge. Des cris aigus, des hourras de triomphe s'élevaient. Un remous continu faisait osciller la multitude. Frédéric, pris entre deux masses profondes, ne bougeait pas, fasciné d'ailleurs et s'amusant extrêmement. Les blessés qui tombaient, les morts étendus n'avaient pas l'air de vrais blessés, de vrais morts. Il lui semblait assister à un spectacle' (p. 290). Here, in contrast to the experience of the steamboat, we are witness to an actual 'diorama' effect, in which the observer remains immobile before an unfolding moving spectacle which is produced, apparently, for the observer's amusement. 'Il lui semblait' suggests also that what Frédéric is witness to constitutes a preconceived notion of what a spectacle should be. Consider also Walter Benjamin's comment: 'The attitude of the flâneur – epitome of the political attitude of the middle classes during the Second Empire'. Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1999), p. 420 [M2, 5].

If there is a perfect *flâneur* in Frédéric's world, it is one idealised by him in the figure of Jacques Arnoux, witnessed (instantaneously, from a mobile vantage point) for the first time in the midst of the crowd on the deck of the *Ville-de-Montereau*:

[I]l marchait sur le pont à pas rapides; il s'avança jusqu'au bout, du côté de la cloche; – et, dans un cercle de passagers et de matelots, il vit un monsieur qui contait des galanteries à une paysanne, tout en lui maniant la croix d'or qu'elle portait sur la poitrine.

(p. 4)

His connection to the crowd persists even after he has made eye contact with Frédéric ('il offrit des cigares à tous ceux qui l'entouraient'); his account of his life which he then provides shows him to have perambulated through every area of society. Frédéric's attraction to him is instant. In an earlier version, Frédéric's admiring glance is presented thus:

Frédéric le regarda avec l'admiration qu'aurait un soldat pour son empereur voyageant incognito.³⁹

This invites comparison with Baudelaire's statement that 'l'observateur est un *prince* qui jouit partout de son incognito'.⁴⁰ The extract, in echoing Baudelaire's formulation, suggests that Arnoux is an idealised *flâneur* – not a prince but an emperor, and furthermore imagined in a comical scenario which stretches credibility, in that the emperor's disguise would surely rule out the possibility of admiration. The identification of Frédéric with the soldier opens the possibility of a further intertext: his adulation elevates Arnoux to the

³⁹ B.N., N.a.f., 17599, f° 7v.

⁴⁰ Baudelaire, *Le Peintre de la vie moderne*, op. cit., p. 881, emphasis in original. Cf. also the following definition: 'INCOGNITO. – Costume des princes en voyage'. Flaubert, *Dictionnaire des idées reçues*, appendix to *Bouvard et Pécuchet* (Paris: Garnier, 1966), p. 361. When Frédéric, in disguise, first meets Rosanette at the *bal masqué* in part II, chapter 1, she announces him jokingly to the crowd as a prince: "Le sieur Arnoux, marmiton, et un prince de ses amis!" (p. 116). Later, he replaces a real prince as her lover.

pedestal of a disguised Napoléon I as envisaged by a Julien Sorel.⁴¹ Of course, Arnoux, whom Frédéric, at best a would-be *flâneur* as much as he is a would-be artist, wishes to emulate in furtherance of his vain and cliché-fuelled ambition, is not much more of an artist than Frédéric; his artistic inclinations, if ever motivated by anything other than financial gain, become progressively degraded.⁴² Frédéric's adoption of Arnoux as a role-model in so many spheres proves to be one of the chief obstacles to his self-fulfilment. For Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson, his key failure is as a *flâneur*:

Flaubert's *flâneur* is neither Balzac's triumphant artist nor again the detached onlooker of the July Monarchy. He does not even attain the intermittent creativity of Baudelaire's tortured artist. He is, rather, a figure of failure, of the impossibility of placing oneself in the city so emphatically producing the space of modernity.⁴³

If Frédéric fails to achieve the status of Baudelaire's *flâneur*, it is because his idealisation of Arnoux as *flâneur* is based on inflated premises.

The model which Frédéric begins to emulate in 1840 may be a flawed version of one, as the implicit reference to Baudelaire might suggest, formulated explicitly in the late 1850s; however, the novel's perspective, even when focalised through Frédéric, is not restricted to the period it depicts. As Ferguson states, 'nowhere does [Flaubert] call Frédéric Moreau a *flâneur*. Nevertheless, Frédéric is a *flâneur*, and even though the novel takes place during the July Monarchy, Frédéric is a *flâneur* for the Second Empire during which Flaubert wrote the novel'.⁴⁴ Any explicit references to *flânerie* may be absent from

⁴¹ We might also regard the substitution of 'prince' for 'empereur' as a comment on Second Empire adulation of Napoléon III.

⁴² When Arnoux first meets his future wife, in 'fluvial' circumstances not unlike those in which Frédéric first encounters her, he too harbours artistic ambitions: 'Un jour, Arnoux, dessinant au bord de la rivière (il se croyait peintre dans ce temps-là), l'avait aperçue comme elle sortait de l'église et demandée en mariage' (p. 171). It would seem that Mme Arnoux is invariably apprehended as a subject for representation, or as an object already represented (in this case, emerging from church, an ideal bride).

⁴³ Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson, *Paris as Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 94-95.

⁴⁴ Ferguson, *Paris as Revolution*, p. 95.

the final version of the novel, but where they do exist in the *avant-texte*, they throw light on whatever implicit vestiges of the phenomenon may remain in the finished text. Another important point to remember is that Second Empire stagnation is almost defined by the type of overly idealised ambitions (political, artistic, social, romantic) harboured during the July Monarchy. The representational filter through which modernity is apprehended during the period of its perceived apotheosis is already starting to make its effects felt on board the *Ville-de-Montereau*; one of the key features of Flaubert's novel is an implicit insistence that new forms of experience connected with modernity were already informing perception and representation in the 1840s. Its protagonist's failure lies in his inability to resolve the tension between modern and pre-modern ways of representing the world. The modern, for Frédéric, is apprehended through a filter of sentimental and romantic cliché.

If Arnoux is, at least initially, idealised as a *flâneur* by Frédéric, who wishes to emulate him, he is ultimately an imperfect role-model whose curiosity about the modern world and marriage to the crowd (and, for that matter, to his wife) are tainted by bourgeois greed and *bêtise*. One of Arnoux's most significant acts of public curiosity is his observation of the steam boiler on board the *Ville-de-Montereau*:

Mais il s'interrompt pour observer le tuyau de la cheminée, puis il marmotta vite un long calcul, afin de savoir 'combien chaque coup de piston, à tant de fois par minute, devait, etc.'
 – Et, la somme trouvée, il admira beaucoup le paysage.

(p. 5)⁴⁵

There is no suggestion here as to what his motives for this technological *flânerie* might

⁴⁵ 'CHEMINÉE. – Fume toujours. Sujet de discussion à propos du chauffage'. Flaubert, *Dictionnaire des idées reçues*, p. 341.

be.⁴⁶ However, an earlier version suggests that what is being presented is indeed a *calcul*, an instance of bourgeois economic interest masquerading as scientific enquiry:

Puis [ayant tiré sa montre] il marmotta un long calcul afin de savoir combien chaque coup de piston [se répétant quarante fois par minute devait coûter [illisible] prelevant [d'abord] comme frais etc [etc] et la somme enfin trouvée, il [regarda] <contempla> le paysage.⁴⁷

Contemplation of the landscape is possible only once the profitability of this modern venture has been calculated; it is almost a function of its commercial viability. It is to be recalled that optical devices such as the phenakistiscope and the diorama were not merely instruments of scientific enquiry, but also commercially viable forms of entertainment.⁴⁸ Similarly, on the *Ville-de-Montereau*, there is an awareness on the part of the bourgeoisie of the connection between the modernity and the profitability of what is in many ways a mobile spectacle providing public amusement, as an earlier draft suggests:

La foule envahissait leur compartiment et ils ne s'en distinguaient pas. Mais tous étaient joyeux, vu la belle matinée, la saison, la modicité du prix et l'invention nouvelle qui leur faisait [des] faire des questions où s'étalait l'incurable bêtise du bourgeois parisien.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ The following extract from *The Communist Manifesto* (1848) on the new relations between the bourgeoisie and the crowd, like Flaubert's novel, uses water imagery in its exposition of the degradation of the 'higher' sensibilities by economic interest: '[The bourgeoisie] has pitilessly torn asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to his "natural superiors", and has left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous "cash payment". It has drowned the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervour, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of philistine sentimentalism, in the icy water of egotistical calculation'. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), intr. by A.J.P. Taylor (London: Penguin, 1985), p. 82.

⁴⁷ B.N., N.a.f., 17599, f° 34. Walter Benjamin comments: 'The flâneur is the observer of the marketplace. His knowledge is akin to the occult science of industrial fluctuations. He is a spy for the capitalists, on assignment in the realm of consumers'. Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, p. 427 [M5, 6].

⁴⁸ On the connection between entertainment, science and edification as an integral element of bourgeois *bêtise*, consider the following: 'JOUETS. – Devraient toujours être scientifiques'. Flaubert, *Dictionnaire des idées reçues*, p. 364.

⁴⁹ B.N., N.a.f., 17599, f° 13. cf. secondary definition of Modicité: médiocrité, petitesse (Robert). Cf also f° 18: 'Aux premières, deux chasseurs tenaient leurs fusils entre leurs jambes, trois bourgeois discutaient, un Monsieur, [une] Dame et leur fils en collégien occupaient des pliants. la Dame avait peur, son époux la rassurait, et adressait des questions 'nautiques' au Capitaine, qui se promenait sur la passerelle, d'un tambour à l'autre, sans s'arrêter'. The highly significant inverted commas around 'nautiques' are missing from the transcription which appears in the Variantes section of the Garnier edition (p. 510).

In the final version, these questions are present, asked by ‘des pères de famille’ (p. 6) but are not subject to any narratorial comment, or indeed attributable to any motivation. Also, the bourgeoisie are kept apart, in the ‘Premières’, from the masses, the only incursion being when, later, ‘le joueur d’instrument [...] entra dans les Premières’ (p. 7). This ‘joueur de harpe en haillons’ is significant in that he is one of the few individuals (along with Arnoux and his household) whose clothes are described. Among the other passengers, sartorial indistinguishability is the norm:

Comme on avait coutume alors de se vêtir sordidement en voyage, presque tous portaient de vieilles calottes grecques ou des chapeaux déteints, de maigres habits noirs râpés par le frottement du bureau, ou des redingotes ouvrant la capsule de leurs boutons pour avoir trop servi au magasin [...].

(p. 5)⁵⁰

Despite the initial premise of apparent universality of attire, this description continues in great detail about specific items of clothing, which, however, are not attributed to any individuals. What is particularly significant here is that, apart from the mention of the date in the first line of the novel, this is the first explicit signal that the events being described are being recounted from a significant temporal distance. A previous version (‘En effet on avait coutume en ce temps-là <alors> de <se> vêtir sordidement pr voyager.’) provides further confirmation that the time of the events and the time of narration are in two separate epochs.⁵¹ What this would appear to be is a representation of July Monarchy attire which acknowledges its perspective in the Second Empire. It is furthermore one which explicitly identifies the attire described with a specific historical moment. In this sense it appears to

⁵⁰ The practice of avoiding conspicuous attire while travelling is advocated by the ‘Guide du voyageur géologue’ consulted by Bouvard and Pécuchet: ‘Il faut avoir, premièrement, un bon havresac de soldat, puis une chaîne d’arpenteur, une lime, des pinces, une boussole, et trois marteaux passés dans une ceinture qui se dissimule sous la redingote et “vous préserve ainsi de cette apparence originale que l’on doit éviter en voyage”’. Flaubert, *Bouvard et Pécuchet* (Paris: Garnier, 1966), p. 111.

⁵¹ B.N., N.a.f., 17599, f° 1.

go against the Baudelairean prescription for the 'painting of modern life'. Baudelaire criticises 'la tendance générale des artistes à habiller tous les sujets de costumes anciens'.

C'est évidemment le signe d'une grande paresse; car il est beaucoup plus commode de déclarer que tout est absolument laid dans l'habit d'une époque, que de s'appliquer à en extraire la beauté mystérieuse qui y peut être contenue, si minime ou si légère qu'elle soit.⁵²

This criticism, however, applies to subjects which are 'd'une nature générale applicable à toutes les époques'. As we have seen, Flaubert's description self-acknowledgedly specifies a historical context. The passengers on the *Ville-de-Montereau* might well be declared to be living in an age of sartorial ugliness, if only for travel purposes, but the account proceeds also to transcend the apparent totality of this ugliness in order to 'dégager de la mode ce qu'elle peut contenir de poétique dans l'historique', that is, to identify and communicate 'ce quelque chose qu'on nous permettra d'appeler la *modernité*'.⁵³ Flaubert's invisible narratorial eye, contextualised in the Second Empire, is able to describe a modernity contextualised in 1840 precisely because of its spatial and temporal mobility. Unlike the would-be artist-*flâneur*, who fails to cope with modernity by seeing the present in terms of the past rather than the past in terms of the present, it is able to do both, enjoying the capacity to be 'hors de chez soi, et pourtant se sentir partout chez soi; voir le monde, être au centre du monde et rester caché au monde'.⁵⁴

Modernity, to complete Baudelaire's famous formulation of an aesthetic for the modern age, 'c'est le transitoire, le fugitif, le contingent, la moitié de l'art, dont l'autre moitié est l'éternel et l'immuable'.⁵⁵ Modern representation, in this sense, would appear to depend on the paradoxical juxtaposition (as in the case of the description of the passengers

⁵² Baudelaire, *Le Peintre de la vie moderne*, op. cit., p. 884.

⁵³ Baudelaire, *Le Peintre de la vie moderne*, op. cit., p. 884, emphasis in original.

⁵⁴ Baudelaire, *Le Peintre de la vie moderne*, op. cit., p. 881.

⁵⁵ Baudelaire, *Le Peintre de la vie moderne*, op. cit., p. 884.

and their attire) of variety and uniformity, and most significantly in the present context, of movement and stasis. We have seen how the latter juxtaposition informs the way in which Frédéric perceives the world around him; his experience as an observer who is a component in the particular 'dioramic' machine ensemble of the *Ville-de-Montereau* is one which provides privileged access to modernity and its relationship with representation. As important as the static's appearing mobile, however, is the mobile's appearing static. This is particularly true in the case of Frédéric's visualisation of Mme Arnoux, whom he encounters for the first time on the deck of the *Ville-de-Montereau*. Like everyone else on the steamboat, she is moving (and is indeed mobile, in circulation, elsewhere in the novel), but is invariably perceived by Frédéric as being static.

What the apparent fixity of the image of Mme Arnoux has in common with the way Frédéric perceives static phenomena as being mobile is perhaps the disjunction between eye and object referred to above, the problematic nature of purely mimetic representation, the necessity of a medium through which phenomena are filtered to the human consciousness, which is at an abstract remove from the eye. Here, the remove is as temporal as it is phenomenological. There is no specific moment at which Mme Arnoux can be said to be apprehended for the first time; the phenomenological experience to which Frédéric is subjected is not 'une apparition'. Rather, 'Ce fut comme une apparition'; it merely corresponds to a preconceived notion of what 'une apparition' is supposed to be like. And although a person presumably already familiar to the temporally distanced mind, if not the eye, of the beholder (if the repeated use of the capitalized pronoun 'Elle' is anything to go by) is being described, no single individual is discernible, at least not at the time of the event being described.

Elle était assise, au milieu du banc, toute seule; ou du moins il ne distingua personne, dans l'éblouissement que lui envoyèrent ses yeux.

(p. 6)

Here there is an ambiguity as to whose eyes are in question here. If Mme Arnoux's, then Frédéric is simply blinded, or believes he is blinded. If Frédéric's, then what Frédéric experiences, visually and psychologically, is not actually what his eyes see, but what his eyes send him; his phenomenological consciousness is at a remove from his vision. His eyes, it appears, are processing visual information; even if there is anyone else there, it is as if they are blocked by a representational filter. At this stage Frédéric is still in motion in relation to Mme Arnoux; it is only when he stops to look at her that the discrete elements which constitute her are enumerated. Whereas other phenomena which appear or disappear usually do so as a function of many distinct items becoming one (for example, 'Paris disparaissant' (p. 3), or 'Des grues et des magasins parurent. C'était Creil.' (p. 192)), here what has initially been apprehended from a moving standpoint is broken up, once contemplated from a static one, into its component parts. If this image can exist as a single entity, it is one which paradoxically is indissociable from its fetishistically composite status:

Elle avait un large chapeau de paille, avec des rubans roses, qui palpaient au vent, derrière elle. Ses bandeaux noirs, contournant la pointe de ses grands sourcils, descendaient très bas et semblaient presser amoureusement l'ovale de sa figure. Sa robe de mousseline claire, tachetée de petits pois, se répandait à plis nombreux. Elle était en train de broder quelque chose; et son nez droit, son menton, toute sa personne se découpait sur le fond de l'air bleu.

(p. 6)⁵⁶

⁵⁶ See Diana Knight, 'Object Choices: Taste and Fetishism in Flaubert's *L'Éducation sentimentale*', in *French Literature, Thought and Culture in the Nineteenth Century: A Material World. Essays in Honour of D.G. Charlton* (London: Macmillan, 1993), ed. by Brian Rigby, pp. 198-217: 'Erotic choices in Flaubert are invariably mediated or accompanied by the investment of affect in material objects connected with the loved person' (p. 198). What is evident in the way Frédéric apprehends his surroundings and Mme Arnoux is what Knight refers to as 'the commodification of both art and sentiment in an emerging industrial age' (p. 199). It is inevitable in this sense that Mme Arnoux will eventually become as much a commodity as she is an object of adoration.

Once again comparison is invited with the vision prescribed for Baudelaire's ideal artist-*flâneur*, for whom woman is not merely 'la femelle de l'homme'.

C'est plutôt une divinité, un astre, qui préside à toutes les conceptions du cerveau mâle: c'est un miroitement de toutes les grâces de la nature condensées dans un seul être; c'est l'objet de l'admiration et de la curiosité la plus vive que le tableau de la vie puisse offrir au contemplateur. C'est une espèce d'idole, stupide peut-être, mais éblouissante, enchanteresse, qui tient les destinées et les volontés suspendues à ses regards. [...]. La femme est sans doute une lumière, un regard, une invitation au bonheur, une parole quelquefois; mais elle est surtout une harmonie générale, non-seulement dans son allure et le mouvement de ses membres, mais aussi dans les mousselines, les gazes, les vastes et chatoyantes nuées d'étoffes dont elle s'enveloppe, et qui sont comme les attributs et le piédestal de sa divinité.

'Quel poète oserait', asks Baudelaire, 'dans la peinture du plaisir causé par l'apparition d'une beauté, séparer la femme de son costume?'⁵⁷. It is Frédéric's very failure to separate Mme Arnoux from the component clichés making up her attire which prevents him from seeing her as a human being, rather than as what Baudelaire refers to as 'une espèce d'idole [...] éblouissante'. The spiritual experience which he is (wilfully) undergoing is not based on any real human contact, but on a visual relationship with the world in which phenomena are mediated through a refractive lens of sentimentality. The act of seeing itself is also mediated for the consumption of others. Attempting to manoeuvre himself inconspicuously to a point adjacent to Mme Arnoux, Frédéric 'affectait d'observer une chaloupe sur la rivière' (p. 6), as if self-consciously adopting behaviour expected of the sensitive individual he wishes to project himself as. Here he is enacting a preconceived notion of what 'observation' is; he is not merely observing anything, and by posing as an 'observer' is attempting to manipulate what others perceive as much as he manipulates what he sees himself. And indeed, he is not described here as seeing anything, only pretending to observe. His sensory capacities have been, as it were, subjected to 'a complex kind of

⁵⁷ Baudelaire, *Le Peintre de la vie moderne*, op. cit., p. 902.

training' by a modern paradigm of representation informed in no small part by the mobile divergence of the observer and the observed, so that seeing as an unmediated and impartial mapping of information to the human consciousness is a virtual impossibility. Frédéric labours under the delusion that the eye is the window to the soul. It should come as no surprise that 'un regard où il avait tâché de mettre tout son âme' has no discernible effect on Mme Arnoux (who has taken up his initial vantage point on the deck, 'près du gouvernail, debout', and ultimately 'immobile'), but he becomes irritated, remonstrating with his servant for not having brought his carriage (p. 10). He is annoyed, as a rough draft suggests, 'car il n'eût pas été fâché de faire savoir aux autres qu'il possédait une voiture'.⁵⁸ Possession of such a token of bourgeois mobility might therefore have enhanced the 'soulfulness' of his gaze.

On dry land, Frédéric continues to exploit the combination of movement and persistent vision to conjure up further distortions of reality. A visual relationship between himself and his surroundings similar to that in operation earlier on the boat (and indeed, later on the train) prevails in the 'américaine' which has whisked him away; the continuum of motion extends to include this less technologically advanced means of transport, so that it too is a mechanism in which a simultaneously mobile and immobile observer is able to see far and wide, and is yet also subjected to a moving set of images:

Des champs moissonnés se prolongeaient à n'en plus finir. Deux lignes d'arbres bordaient la route, les tas de cailloux se succédaient.

(p. 10)⁵⁹

⁵⁸ B.N., N.a.f., 17599, f° 90.

⁵⁹ In *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, the latter's journey away from Paris (presumably on 20 March 1841) shares some elements with Frédéric's. After he leaves Paris ('couvert de sa plus vieille redingote'), 'le mouvement et la nouveauté du voyage l'occupèrent les premières heures'. Subsequently: 'Le lendemain, on repartait dès l'aube; et la route, toujours la même, s'allongeait en montant jusqu'au bord de l'horizon. Les mètres de cailloux se succédaient, les fossés étaient pleins d'eau, la campagne s'étalait par grandes surfaces d'un vert monotone et froid, des nuages couraient dans le ciel, de temps à autre la pluie tombait. Le troisième jour, des bourrasques s'élevèrent. La bâche du chariot, mal attachée, claquait au vent comme la voile d'un navire'. *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, op. cit., p. 46.

As in the later train journey to Creil, the panoramic view of fields is followed by the dioramic view of the more immediate surroundings. However, what Frédéric also witnesses this time is a visual replay of his journey thus far which contains images not fully taken in previously:

[T]out son voyage lui revint à la mémoire, d'une façon si nette qu'il distinguait maintenant des détails nouveaux, des particularités plus intimes.

(p. 10)⁶⁰

These particularities are detailed in another fetishistic enumeration of Mme Arnoux's body parts and clothing; the passing of time and the fleeting apprehension of moving surroundings allow Frédéric to assimilate these disparate afterimages and reconstitute them so that a finished product emerges, as if to fit the specifications of romantic fiction:

Elle ressemblait aux femmes des livres romantiques. Il n'aurait voulu rien ajouter, rien retrancher à sa personne.

(p. 10)

As if in the midst of some all-encompassing optical device which has just been manipulated to create this image of Mme Arnoux at its focal point, Frédéric witnesses the distortion of the entire firmament:

L'univers venait tout à coup de s'élargir. Elle était le point lumineux où l'ensemble des choses convergeait; – et, bercé par le mouvement de la voiture, les paupières à demi closes, le regard dans les nuages, il s'abandonnait à une joie rêveuse et infinie.

(p. 10)

Pleasure is derived from this 'phantasmagoric' coming into focus, brought about by the

⁶⁰ This is echoed towards the end of the novel when Frédéric is travelling to Nogent by train: 'Les maisons bientôt disparurent, la campagne s'élargit. Seul dans son wagon et les pieds sur la banquette, il ruminait les événements des derniers jours, tout son passé' (p. 417).

experience of movement and the orientation of the observer's gaze.⁶¹ The infinity of Frédéric's joy parallels the apparent atemporality of his vision of Mme Arnoux, which in turn serves as a means of occultation of its active production by Frédéric. Frédéric is simultaneously the magician and the deceived; his false optical consciousness prevents him from accepting that the way in which he sees things is coloured by his own magic lanterns; he allows himself to believe that what he allows to filter through to his consciousness consists of unmediated phenomena. The reality which he convinces himself he sees consists of artifice which he has constructed.

If Frédéric's image of Mme Arnoux is a unity constructed from a series of disparate parts, his view of other women, and ultimately of the world in general, is dependent on this unity, or rather on oppositions and similarities which relate to it. In Part I, Chapter 5, after Frédéric has begun to frequent the Arnoux household regularly, the way in which he apprehends her has become increasingly complicated, to the extent that it is part of a generalised way of apprehending the world, or indeed of existing as a sentient being:

La contemplation de cette femme l'énervait, comme l'usage d'un parfum trop fort. Cela descendit dans les profondeurs de son tempérament, et devenait presque une manière générale de sentir, un mode nouveau d'exister.

(p. 67)

⁶¹ Phantasmagoria in its original sense denoted 'a specific type of magic-lantern performance in the 1790s and early 1800s, one that used back projection to keep an audience unaware of the lanterns' (Crary, p. 132). For Benjamin and Adorno it was a term which could be used to describe representation in its wider sense later in the nineteenth century. For Adorno it denoted: 'the occultation of production by means of the outward appearance of the product [...]. This outward appearance can lay claim to the status of being. Its perfection is at the same time the perfection of the illusion that the work of art is a reality *sui generis* that constitutes itself in the realm of the absolute without having to renounce its claim to image the world'. Theodor Adorno. *In Search of Wagner*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (London: Verso, 1981), p. 85, cited in Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, p. 132. Frédéric's attribution of supposed origins to Mme Arnoux ('Il la supposait d'origine andalouse, créole peut-être; elle avait ramené des îles cette négresse avec elle' (p. 7)) might be regarded as phantasmagoric *flânerie* in the idiosyncratic sense suggested by Walter Benjamin: 'The phantasmagoria of the flâneur: to read from faces the profession, the ancestry, the character'. Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, p. 429 [M6, 6].

Again, it is as if there is some type of mediating filter informing his contemplation, not only of Mme Arnoux, but of the world in general. One of its immediate effects is to cause all other women to be contemplated in terms of Mme Arnoux; this 'refraction' occurs within the context of his *flânerie* in the city:

Les prostituées qu'il rencontrait aux feux du gaz, les cantatrices poussant leurs roulades, les écuyères sur leurs chevaux au galop, les bourgeoises à pied, les grisettes à leur fenêtre, toutes les femmes lui rappelaient celle-là, par des similitudes ou par des contrastes violents.
(pp. 67-68)

The existence of this multiplicity of images may appear to generate the unitary image of Mme Arnoux, but this latter image is one which exists already in Frédéric's consciousness, so that the way in which he perceives everything else is in fact generated by symmetrical and oppositional distortions of it. The way he distorts it is similar to that in which another optical device, the kaleidoscope (invented in 1815 by David Brewster), is manipulated in order to produce multiple images from a single one by means of symmetrically arranged mirrors. In Jonathan Crary's description:

The structural underpinnings of the kaleidoscope are bipolar and paradoxically the characteristic effect of shimmering dissolution is produced by a simple binary reflective setup (it consists of two plane mirrors extending the length of [a] tube, inclined at an angle of sixty degrees, or any angle that is a sub-multiple of four right angles). The rotation of this invariant symmetrical format is what generates the appearance of decomposition and proliferation.⁶²

If Frédéric's vision of the world is, then, 'kaleidoscopic', so that what he assimilates as reality is based on bipolar oppositions and symmetries between phenomena, these oppositions and similarities are themselves questionable in the first place. Flaubert's novel is pervaded by such oppositions and parallels, but its overall meaning, if it has any, derives

⁶² Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, pp. 115-16.

from the fact that they are never fully resolved.⁶³ Oppositions are everywhere undermined by parallels, and vice-versa, and any 'kaleidoscopic' effect is as illusory as the binarism from which it derives. According to D.A. Williams, oppositions are set up only to be challenged by a text which 'requires binary oppositions in order to dismiss them or at least soften them by insertion of parallels'.⁶⁴ In the interim, however, the text figures such oppositions and their distorting effects within the paradigm of the modernity which makes them possible. In this particular case, where 'similitudes' and 'contrastes violents' are explicitly referred to, the overall effect is indissociable from the modernity of the observer's experience of the city, its thoroughfares, and its constant movement. The nineteenth-century city may have been witness to what the sociologist Georg Simmel refers to (specifically in the context of the changes brought about in interpersonal relationships by the experience of public transport) as 'a marked preponderance of the activity of the eye over the activity of the ear', but the experience described here demonstrates the existence of a new phenomenological paradigm which extends to all the senses, as part of 'une manière générale de sentir, un mode nouveau d'exister'.⁶⁵ Mme Arnoux's image is distorted kaleidoscopically into a mobile sensory experience of urban modernity in which she herself is imagined as participating, and which immediately brings to mind the *flâneur*, in constant movement through a commercial landscape:

Il regardait, le long des boutiques, les cachemires, les dentelles et les pendeloques de pierreries, en les imaginant drapés autour de ses reins, cousues à son corsage, faisant des feux dans sa chevelure noire. A l'éventaire des marchandes, les fleurs s'épanouissaient pour qu'elle les choisît en passant; dans la montre des cordonniers, les petites pantoufles de satin à bordure de cygne semblaient attendre son pied; toutes les rues conduisaient vers sa maison; les voitures ne stationnaient sur les places que pour y mener plus vite: Paris se

⁶³ On the novel's lack of meaning, Christopher Prendergast observes that its most radical feature is 'precisely, the absence of any "sens profond"'. Christopher Prendergast, 'Flaubert: Writing and Negativity', *Novel*, 8 (1975), 197-213 (p. 211).

⁶⁴ D.A. Williams, 'Sacred and Profane in *L'Éducation sentimentale*', *Modern Language Review*, 73 (1978), 786-98 (p. 787).

⁶⁵ Georg Simmel, *Soziologie*, 4th edn (Berlin, 1958), p. 486, cited in Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire*, p. 38.

rapportait à sa personne, et la grande ville, avec toutes ses voix, bruissait, comme un immense orchestre, autour d'elle.

(p. 68)

Mme Arnoux, as well as being the single image generated from multiple elements, is also, then, the source of a kaleidoscopic multiplicity with which *flânerie*, at least in Baudelaire's account, is intimately connected. For Baudelaire, the kaleidoscope was identifiable with the ideal *flâneur*:

[L]'amoureux de la vie universelle entre dans la foule comme dans un immense réservoir d'électricité. On peut aussi le comparer, lui, à un miroir aussi immense que cette foule; à un kaleïdoscope doué de conscience, qui, à chacun de ses mouvements, représente la vie multiple et la grâce mouvante de tous les éléments de la vie.⁶⁶

None of the *flâneurs*, idealised, *soi-disant*, or otherwise, in *L'Éducation sentimentale* rise to the demands of Baudelaire's 'amoureux de la vie universelle'; rather, at best they engage in a debased form of *flânerie*. It might tentatively be suggested, however, that the novel itself, in its employment of Mitterand's 'optique flaubertienne', while not necessarily being a kaleidoscope gifted with consciousness, is engaged in a form of representation sensitive to the potential of the kaleidoscope and other similar devices, as part of a general awareness that the development of mimetic procedures during the middle period of the nineteenth century, in literature as elsewhere, was not an isolated process restricted to the world of art and *belles lettres*, but was intimately related to the technological and social development of the modernity that these depicted. Any optical device to which the mimetic project can be likened must therefore be of the same dimensions and capacity for movement as the circumstances of the modernity which it represents and which make it possible. If the crowd is an emblematic point of access to modernity, the device which represents it must

⁶⁶ Baudelaire, *Le Peintre de la vie moderne*, op. cit., pp. 881-82.

be 'aussi immense que cette foule'. Furthermore, it is one for which the impossibility of a linear, two-dimensional Stendhalian image is a prerequisite. It is one which paradoxically achieves its intradiegetically non-judgmental impartiality through multiple subjectivities, and presents a vista of paralysis through its temporal and spatial mobility.

According to Jonathan Crary, the kaleidoscope was seen by its inventor as 'a mechanical means for the reformation of art according to an industrial paradigm'.⁶⁷ While *L'Éducation sentimentale* may demonstrate that 'l'art industriel' is a contradiction in terms, and chart the failure of its protagonists to achieve success in either art or industry, it is at the same time a work which recognises that the representation of modernity cannot be dissociated from the forces of modernization. In this sense, it displays an acceptance that changing scientific and industrial paradigms are necessarily interconnected with corresponding changes in representational paradigms; if there is a 'paradigm shift' in the early- to mid-nineteenth century, it pervades the entire social construction of knowledge and representation.⁶⁸ In Flaubert's novel, as in real life, however, pre-industrial ways of seeing the world persist, and come into conflict with forms of perception formulated by modernity. Frédéric's inability to succeed is related to the uneasy co-existence of different perceptive faculties undergoing transformation, and a persistently 'pre-modern' idealising view of the world. According to Marshall Berman, the modernist project, as understood by Baudelaire in *Le Peintre de la vie moderne*, 'is meant to cut against the antiquarian

⁶⁷ Brewster wrote in 1819 that 'there are few machines [...] which rise higher above the operations of human skill. [The Kaleidoscope] will create in an hour, what a thousand artists could not invent in the course of a year; and while it works with such unexampled rapidity, it works also with a corresponding beauty and precision'. Sir David Brewster, *The Kaleidoscope: Its History, Theory, and Construction* (1819; repr. London, 1858), pp. 134-36, cited in Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, p. 116.

⁶⁸ For a detailed discussion of the notion of the scientific 'paradigm', see Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), esp. pp. 10-22. The paradigm is the unquestioned set of beliefs against the background of which scientific discourse is produced. It is usually based on scientific achievement 'sufficiently unprecedented to attract an enduring group of adherents away from competing modes of scientific activity', and 'sufficiently open-ended to leave all sorts of problems for the redefined group of practitioners to resolve' (p. 10). Occasionally, a paradigm can shift, to be replaced by a new one. However, there can be no strictly logical reason for such changes.

classical fixations that dominate French culture'.⁶⁹ One of the ways in which modern art must do this is through exploitation of such phenomena as 'electrical energy, the kaleidoscope, explosion' to 'recreate for itself the immense transformations of matter and energy that modern science and technology – physics, optics, chemistry, engineering – have brought about'.⁷⁰

It might be argued that *L'Éducation sentimentale* does precisely this, or at least that the recreation of such transformation is a central strategy of the novel. It is ultimately a novel of disillusionment, of profanation, of constant degradation of dreams and ambitions; in this sense it can be seen in terms of a run-down in emotional and spiritual energy levels. However, the processes by which this run-down occurs in the psychological plane are paralleled by the technological transformation of matter. If Baudelaire's crowd is 'un immense réservoir d'électricité' constituting the starting point for 'kaleidoscopic' representation of the modern world, the *Ville-de-Montereau* is the site of interdependent reservoirs of potential energy both metaphorical and literal. Among the former are Frédéric's ambitions, which he believes merit realisation through the simple transfer of the 'excellence de son âme' into 'bonheur', and, in Baudelairean terms, the crowd on the deck, whose representational potential is there to be tapped by the *flânerie* described earlier. But the most obvious literal reservoir of energy present is the vessel itself, which in the first two paragraphs of the novel is depicted as having amassed, through the combustion of matter and its resultant effect on water, sufficient steam under pressure, that is, sufficient thermodynamic energy, to propel it away from the quai Saint-Bernard.

Before embarking, as it were, on a 'thermodynamic' reading of Flaubert's text, it

⁶⁹ Marshall Berman, *All That is Solid Melts into Air. The Experience of Modernity* (London: Verso, 1983), p. 131.

⁷⁰ Berman, *All That is Solid Melts into Air*, p. 145.

might be instructive to consider some of the possibilities of thermodynamics as an interpretive metaphor for nineteenth-century forms of representation.⁷¹ As in the case of the development of optical technology, a tendency to view the world in terms of classical criteria persisted in the thermodynamic age. Flaubert's novel is one of a number of works which represents both old and new paradigms together. Another, according to a highly suggestive article by Michel Serres, is Turner's *The Fighting Temeraire*. Serres claims that Turner's painting not only represents visually the displacement of sail by steam, order by disorder, form by matter, but can itself be seen as participating in a thermodynamic combustion process generating a new mode of representation.⁷² Serres, like Crary, identifies in the early nineteenth century a shift in the ordering of perceptions, and consequently of representations, of the world, centred on the displacement of the simple mechanics of Newton and Lagrange by the new scientific theories emerging from the recently discovered motive properties of fire. Self-deluding failure to accept this displacement pervades the nineteenth century, argues Serres in his better-known work on Zola, *Feux et signaux de brume*.⁷³ However, the transformation of artistic representation together with that of industry and movement by thermodynamics is one which, as well as being one of which awareness is suppressed (so that complex thermodynamic systems are misread reassuringly as mere *machines*), is also in some quarters intuitively realised from

⁷¹ The laws of thermodynamics can be summarised briefly as follows: the First Law states that whenever work is produced by heat, a quantity of heat energy is consumed which is proportional to the amount of work done; the Second Law states that in a closed system with constant energy transfer, entropy will always increase, causing the system to degrade towards equilibrium. See *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th edn (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1990), Vol XI, 702.

⁷² Michel Serres, *Hermès III. La Traduction* (Paris: Minuit, 1974). See in particular 'Turner traduit Carnot' (pp. 233-42).

⁷³ 'La machine à feu fonctionne sous deux conditions imprescriptibles: la constance et la dégradation. Le rêve [...] consiste, au dix-neuvième siècle, à ne pas se soumettre aux deux principes en même temps. [...]. L'auto-alimentation de l'auto-moteur'. Michel Serres, *Feux et signaux de brume. Zola* (Paris: Éditions Grasset et Fasquelle, 1975), pp. 62-63. See Chapter 5 below.

the early part of the century onwards.⁷⁴ Serres identifies Turner as a case in point, reading *The Fighting Temeraire* (of 1838, the year of the first scheduled Atlantic crossing by steamer) as an actualization of the transformation of representation in accordance with the new, thermodynamic, terms of reference. The painting depicts the eponymous battleship, a veteran of Trafalgar, being towed to the wrecker's yard by a steam-powered tug. In the background lie the ordered geometric forms of the ship's masts and crossbeams, representing the pre-thermodynamic age, where motion was explained according to the simple mechanical criteria of Newton and Lagrange. The latter's *Mécanique analytique* of 1778 constitutes the apotheosis of the *tabulation*, the *recapitulation*, which signalled the end of this particular scientific era, just as the work of the commercial artist Garrard cited by Serres in contrast with Turner 'tabulates' the corresponding representational paradigm, or, to use Foucault's term, *épistémè*.⁷⁵ According to Serres:

Il s'agit d'un tableau, dans le sens de tabulation. Énoncer l'outillage et ne rien omettre. Tabuler tous les produits de la mécanique, statique et dynamique. De la charpente aux mâts de charge, de la roue à la voile. Tout cela fait un monde. Un monde dessiné. Un monde dessinable. [...] Les outils dominés par la forme, produits par elle. D'où le dessin domine la peinture...⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Stephen G. Brush, in *The Kind of Motion we call Heat: A History of the Kinetic Theory of Gases in the Nineteenth Century*, 2 vols (Amsterdam, 1976) points out that there is a widespread view that nineteenth-century Physics was a relatively peaceful continuation of the Newtonian era, and that revolutionary changes only began at the start of the present century. The truth of the matter, according to Brush, is that while the second scientific revolution was not complete until the mid-twentieth century, it had actually begun over a hundred years earlier (I, 35).

⁷⁵ Michel Foucault, *Les Mots et les choses* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966). See especially, in the context of the epistemological shift which occurred towards the end of the eighteenth century, Ch. VII, 'Les limites de la représentation', for a discussion of 'ces mutations qui font que soudain les choses ne sont plus perçues, décrites, énoncées, caractérisées, classées et sues de la même façon, et que dans l'interstice des mots ou sous leur transparence, ce ne sont plus les richesses, les êtres vivants, le discours qui s'offrent au savoir, mais des êtres radicalement différents' (p. 229).

⁷⁶ Serres, 'Turner traduit Carnot', p. 234. On a related note, we have seen elsewhere how Baudelaire advocates the abandonment of classical models in the representation of attire, but this principle applies to the modern world in general: 'La même critique s'applique rigoureusement à l'étude du militaire, du dandy, de l'animal même, chien ou cheval, et de tout ce qui compose la vie extérieure de ce siècle. [...] Presque toute notre originalité vient de l'estampille que le temps imprime à nos sensations. [...] Que diriez-vous, par exemple, d'un peintre de marines [...] qui, ayant à reproduire la beauté sobre et élégante du navire moderne, fatiguerait ses yeux à étudier les formes surchargées, contournées, l'arrière monumental du navire ancien et les voilures compliquées du XVI^e siècle?' (p. 886).

In contrast to the ordered woodwork of the battleship lie the foregrounded tug's drums and funnel. The black smoke and red sparks emanating from the funnel typify the disorder and dissolution which are an essential element of the thermodynamic process. Essentially, what is being made redundant, or more properly, being transformed beyond recognition, is the tendency to classify, the taxonomic urge. No longer is motion explicable in ordered, linear, logical, *differentiable*, terms, and, as if to intensify this, the smoke-belching funnel of the tug is depicted by Turner as being closer to the front of the vessel than is technically possible, and no towing cables are actually visible.⁷⁷ Matter, the depiction of which was previously dictated by form, by geometry, now, with the introduction of fire, dictates representation. Detail may be important, and may occasionally be exact locally, but the actual order in which it is represented is secondary. There has also been suspicion that the sun is setting in the east, lending support to the notion that fire is more important than orientation and geometry in the new representational paradigm.⁷⁸ In the real world, 'le feu remplace l'air et l'eau pour transformer la terre'. Turner abandons rational, geometric conceptualisations of this real world and 'voit la matière se transformer par le feu. La nouvelle matière du monde au travail, où la géométrie est courte. Tout se renverse, la matière, la peinture triomphent du dessin, de la géométrie, de la forme'.⁷⁹ *The Fighting Temeraire* expresses perfectly for Serres the process by which the apprehension and representation of unrelated, undifferentiated particles become more important than rational forms and straight lines. Similarly, for Jonathan Crary, Turner's work is central to the new status of the observer, and the artist's relationship to the sun is the best context in which to

⁷⁷ See Judy Egerton, *Turner, The Fighting Temeraire* (London: National Gallery Publications, 1995), esp. pp. 90-93, and p. 103 (plate 72): 'Ignoring the conventions of contemporary steamboat design, Turner places his tug's funnel foremost, before the mast, in order to emphasise the dominance of steam and to maximise the effect of fiery tug smoke belching upwards and flowing backwards through the Temeraire's masts'.

⁷⁸ Egerton, *Turner, The Fighting Temeraire*, p. 92.

⁷⁹ Serres, 'Turner traduit Carnot', pp. 235-36.

discuss it:

Just as the sun described by classical mechanics was displaced by new notions of heat, time, death, and entropy, so the sun presupposed by the camera obscura (that is, a sun that could only be indirectly re-presented to a human eye) was transformed by the position of a new artist-observer. In Turner all of the mediations that previously had distanced and protected an observer from the dangerous brilliance of the sun are cast off. The exemplary figures of Kepler and Newton employed the camera obscura precisely to avoid looking directly into the sun while seeking to gain knowledge of it or of the light it propagated. [...]. Turner's direct confrontation with the sun, however, dissolves the very possibility of representation that the camera obscura was meant to ensure.⁸⁰

According to Gillian Beer, 'ideas pass more rapidly into the state of assumptions when they are *unread*'.⁸¹ And essential to Serres's analysis is the point that Turner, 'premier vrai génie en thermodynamique' though he might be, was not necessarily familiar with the technical details of the new scientific developments. 'Carnot n'a pas été lu'. Indeed, the 'Ur-text' of thermodynamics, Sadi Carnot's *Réflexions sur la puissance motrice du feu*, although published in 1824, was largely unknown until mid-century; the term 'thermodynamics' was coined in 1849 by William Thomson (later Lord Kelvin), who formulated and communicated to a wide audience what became known as Carnot's Second Law.⁸² For Serres, what is central to the realism, to the materialism of Turner's work is not technical knowledge of the new phenomena (nor indeed technical exactitude, as the position of the funnel shows), but a rejection of the terms of reference of the previous scientific paradigm, a rejection of the need for a wholly rational and internally coherent system of

⁸⁰ Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, pp. 138-39.

⁸¹ Gillian Beer, *Darwin's Plots* (London: Routledge, 1983), p. 6, emphasis in original.

⁸² N.L.S. [Sadi] Carnot, *Réflexions sur la puissance motrice du feu et sur les machines propres à développer cette puissance* (Paris: Bachelier, 1824); see also Hellemans and Bunch, *The Timetables of Science*, p. 285, p. 319. Foucault is instructive again here. In *Les Mots et les choses*, he discusses the emergence over a very short time, from classical forms of representation ('ces manières d'ordonner l'empiricité que furent le discours, le tableau, les échanges'), of 'ces savoirs maintenant familiers que nous appelons depuis le XIXe siècle philologie, biologie, économie politique' (p. 232). Economics, for example, had previously been considered in terms of 'réflexions sur les richesses'. Might it not perhaps be the case that Carnot's work (published near the end of the broad period, 1775-1825, of the paradigm shift Foucault describes) is of the same stamp, grounded in the 'pre-historic' age, in that its title suggests 'réflexions' about certain properties of fire, only one part of the complex process later understood as 'thermodynamics'?

representation. Turner's 'introduction de la matière ignée dans la culture' is necessarily devoid of any schematization:

Turner a compris et fait voir le nouveau monde, la matière nouvelle. *La perception du stochastique remplace le dessin de la forme.*

La matière n'est plus laissée aux prisons du schéma. Le feu la dissout, la fait vibrer, trembler, osciller, la fait exploser en *nuages*.⁸³

The painting represents, in a sense, the triumph of random distribution of matter and information over organisation according to the classical *épistémè*, in the same way that the thermodynamic process causes systems to tend towards an undifferentiated equilibrium, in which matter is equalised, and sameness supersedes difference, ultimately thwarting attempts to classify.

Another major idea is that the work itself is thermodynamically active. Serres points to the contrast between the 'hot' and 'cold' 'zones' of the painting:

l'immense partage du ciel et de la mer en deux zones: l'une rouge, jaune, orangée, où gueulent les couleurs chaudes, ignées, brûlantes, l'autre, violette, bleue, verte, glauque, où gèlent les valeurs froides et glacées.⁸⁴

This opposition constitutes a potential difference sufficient to produce movement, so that 'le monde entier devient, dans sa matière propre, une machine à feu entre deux sources, celles de Carnot, la froide et la chaude. L'eau de la mer, au réservoir. Turner est entré *dans* la chaudière. Le tableau, 1838, est *dans* le remorqueur'.⁸⁵

The work itself, then, constitutes a motive force engendering the transformation of the way in which the transformed world is portrayed. The very means of representation parallel the functioning of what is represented. Is it possible to read *L'Éducation*

⁸³ Serres, 'Turner traduit Carnot', p. 237. The emphasis is Serres's.

⁸⁴ Serres, 'Turner traduit Carnot', p. 236.

⁸⁵ Serres, 'Turner traduit Carnot', p. 237.

sentimentale in the same way? Does Flaubert enter ‘dans la chaudière’ in the way that the artist-*flâneur* ‘entre dans un immense réservoir d’électricité’? As we have seen, the work’s representational dynamic is founded largely on oppositions; these might be read as ‘potential differences’ generating textual ‘movement’. According to Mitterand, the *incipit*, in which the *Ville-de-Montereau*, a boat of a type similar to the tug of Turner’s painting, builds up steam and then departs, ‘décline les ressources de l’association antonymique, ou contrastive: contraste entre le mécanique et le naturel, le peuplé et le désert, le bruit et le silence, l’agitation et le calme (‘dans un bateau sans voiles, un homme assis pêchait’), l’individu et la foule, le divertissement et la méditation, etc. Le texte glisse sur lui-même, d’associations en associations’.⁸⁶

The overriding opposition in the novel, present from the beginning, is that between sacred and profane. It is one which everywhere is undermined, on account of its being grounded in the modernization process. One way in which this blurring of sacred and profane begins to express itself is in the form of the ironic juxtaposition of an idealised vision of water-based travel, namely a journey by sailing ship (the ‘navire’ to the status of which the packet-boat is elevated), with the banal steam-driven reality of an ‘excursion maritime’. On another level, the episode seems to evoke the working of a force, based in the induced decomposition of solid matter, enacting the disruption of, but also perhaps simultaneously generating, the dreams linked by Masson with water imagery.⁸⁷ The *Ville-de-Montereau*’s movement is brought about by the disruption by fire and earth of water’s liquid state, which at the same time creates steam as well as the waste matter of smoke. Auguste Dezalay sees, from the beginning of *L’Éducation sentimentale* onwards (by

⁸⁶ Mitterand, *L’Illusion réaliste*, p. 40.

⁸⁷ Bernard Masson, ‘L’Eau et les rêves dans *L’Éducation sentimentale*’, op. cit. Masson reads the novel in terms of ‘un cycle de l’eau [...], de l’eau en ses trois états d’intériorité croissante et d’objectivité décroissante. — le fleuve, la fluidité, le rêve’ (p. 184).

contrast with Zola's *La Bête humaine*), 'un processus d'effacement des rythmes du monde industriel par leur immersion dans le grand courant uniforme du fleuve de la vie'.⁸⁸ It is arguable, on the contrary, that present here, and throughout the novel, are disruption of, but also generation of, the spiritual by the material, or perhaps, rather, an understated insistence that the air and water with which happiness, dreams and idealism are associated are necessarily a function of fragmented earth and fire, and cannot prevent reality from making its presence felt, despite attempts to suppress awareness of it. Simultaneously, the spiritual disrupts material reality: the immersion of Frédéric's perceptive faculties in water prevents him from apprehending the real world.

According to Victor Brombert, a basic irony of the *Ville-de-Montereau* is that dreams take place in the 'floating mediocrity of public transportation', indeed that Frédéric's dream world is in fact engendered by sordid 'reality'.⁸⁹ The 'profanation of dreams' is hinted at in elemental terms in the first sentence, where the steamboat 'fumait à gros tourbillons'.⁹⁰ In Brownian terms, the atmosphere is being polluted with the unregulated motion of particles, itself a by-product of the creation of the harnessed, controlled, regulated motion of particles in a steam boiler. The igneous disintegration of fossil fuel, for the purpose of forward motion, results in two forms of Brownian gaseous

⁸⁸ Auguste Dezalay, *L'Opéra des Rougon-Macquart. Essai de rythmologie romanesque* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1983), p. 337.

⁸⁹ Victor Brombert, *The Novels of Flaubert* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), pp. 142-43.

⁹⁰ The term 'tourbillon' recurs throughout the novel. It is possible that its use in the very first line suggests a reference to Rousseau's *Émile*, in which education begins with immersion in the 'tourbillon social': 'Mais considérez premièrement, que voulant former l'homme de la nature il ne s'agit pas pour cela d'en faire un sauvage et de le reléguer au fond des bois, mais qu'enfermé dans le tourbillon social, il suffit qu'il ne s'y laisse entraîner ni par les passions ni par les opinions des hommes, qu'il voye par ses yeux, qu'il sente par son cœur, qu'aucune autorité ne le gouverne hors celle de sa propre raison. [...]. Le même homme qui doit rester stupide dans les forêts doit devenir raisonnable et sensé dans les villes quand il y sera simple spectateur'. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile ou de l'Éducation* (1762) in *Œuvres Complètes*, 4 vols (Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1959-69), IV (1969), pp. 550-51.

motion, one 'sacred', one 'profane', with origins respectively aqueous and solid.⁹¹

This motion is replicated in human terms in the description of the chaos prior to departure:

Des gens arrivaient hors d'haleine; des barriques, des câbles, des corbeilles de linge gênaient la circulation; les matelots ne répondaient à personne; on se heurtait; les colis montaient entre les deux tambours, et le tapage s'absorbait dans le bruissement de la vapeur, qui, s'échappant par des plaques de tôle, enveloppait tout d'une nuée blanchâtre, tandis que la cloche, à l'avant, tintait sans discontinuer.

(p. 3)

Human particles, qualified immediately in gaseous, respiratory terms, and then situated in a closed space, bombard one another and inanimate objects. 'Circulation' and communication are obstructed; gas is trapped, apart from the steam which manages to escape from the 'plaques de tôle'. Human voices are repressed; the sounds of the engine, however, mingle with the hissing of steam. Repetitive 'tapage' and 'tint[ement]' of matter against matter interrupt and are simultaneously concealed by the continuous 'bruissement de la vapeur'. 'La cloche [...] tintait sans discontinuer', as does later, in February 1848, 'la sonnette du président' amid the hot air of another locus of incommunicability, the 'Club de l'Intelligence' (p. 308). Likewise, visibility is reduced, reality obscured, by 'une nuée blanchâtre'; 'reality', fragmented and undifferentiated, must make its presence felt through noise. Human interaction is thus initially reduced to breathlessness and voicelessness;

91 Although there is no explicit reference in *L'Éducation sentimentale* to Brownian motion (identified by the Scottish botanist Robert Brown in 1827), Flaubert's awareness of it is indicated by its presence in *Bouvard et Pécuchet* as one of many scientific topics which elicit encyclopaedic curiosity: 'Ils rêvaient sur l'archée de Van Helmont, le vitalisme, le brownisme, l'organicisme; demandaient au docteur d'où vient le germe de la scrofule, vers quel endroit se porte le miasme contagieux, et le moyen, dans tous les cas morbides, de distinguer la cause de ses effets. "La cause et l'effet s'embrouillent", répondait Vaucorbeil'. (Flaubert, *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, p. 96). As muddled as cause and effect here are the scientific disciplines being discussed. Jan Baptista Van Helmont defined 'archaea' in 1626 as an alien being which caused disease: six years earlier he had coined the term 'gas' from the Flemish word for 'chaos'. The enumeration and enquiry following the citing of his name contains terms pertinent both to the transmissibility of illness and gas theory. See Alexander Hellemans and Bryan Bunch, *The Timetables of Science* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988), p. 131, p. 132.

human subjectivity is effaced due to the constraints of space placed upon it. The inanimate becomes animate, and it is not by human subjects but by the physical evidence of modern industry that the animated landscape is populated. When human subjectivity is finally introduced in the form of fog-obstructed contemplation by a young man of ‘des clochers, des édifices dont il ne savait pas les noms’, a series of material objects which would otherwise be real, distinguishable (and thus meaningful) is obscured, rendered indifferentiable, by the filter of gaseous matter through which it is perceived. However, the air which Frédéric has bottled up inside him, controlled in a closed space (analogous to the anonymous passengers, who, although they are out of breath, are themselves particles in an enclosed space), seems as responsible for his lack of vision as the opaque and unregulated fog. Once, following a discontinuous action (‘il embrassa [...]’) identifying specific landmarks (paralleling the switch from imperfect to *passé simple* when the boat moves off), motion is seen (by Frédéric) to be firmly established, once the energy which has been built up is seen to have begun subsiding, to have been converted into motion, Frédéric is able to follow suit and let off steam, as it were (‘Paris disparaissant, il poussa un grand soupir’), and is then identified.⁹² From the *avant-texte* we learn that ‘l’exubérance de sa jeunesse était chauffée de littérature contemporaine – René Chil [*sic*] Harold’.⁹³ From this point of embarkation on his adult life onwards, the romantic potential energy built up by this material continues to dissipate like the energy of the steam boiler, and the material itself is transformed, in that the clichés of romantic and Balzacian novel forms are reordered and undermined to produce a narrative that is essentially a multiplicity of seemingly disconnected and equalised descriptive scenes and fragments. One critic speaks of the

⁹² See James H. Reid, *Narration and Description in the Nineteenth-Century French Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) for a discussion of the use of perfective and imperfective tenses in this episode.

⁹³ B.N, N.a.f., 17599, f° 6v.

novel's 'impressionist' style, but this is perhaps as facile as to call Turner a 'pré-impressionniste', rather than the 'réaliste, proprement un matérialiste' whom Serres identifies.⁹⁴ What is essential is the destruction of linearity, be it that of narrative, description or of the motion represented, ensuring 'le défaut de ligne droite'.

After Frédéric has become identified, so too do the other passengers become more identifiable and distinct once the thermodynamic and human 'tumulte' of departure has died down, although their demeanour becomes by contrast 'plus insignifiant encore' once *ennui* has spread through the atmosphere, and has had the effect of slowing the boat's motion. Once the machine has reached its 'point de rosée', its motion is constant and rhythmical, and smoke, anthropomorphically spat out in 'un rôle lent et rythmique', has displaced steam – the exterior surplus of which has been recondensed into 'des gouttelettes de rosée' – as the visible and more distinguishable product of fuel combustion.⁹⁵ At the same time the smoke has become stabilised into 'panaches', plumes, rather than the 'gros tourbillons' pumped out during the build-up of the thermodynamic energy necessary for departure. Steam, having been released under increasingly high pressure, has been recondensed to liquid once a constant pressure has been established; clarity and detail have momentarily displaced obscurity and confusion. Reality seems to present itself in terms of a regular rhythm which disrupts the predominance of dreams and contemplation, resulting here in the 'beating' of water by the wheels, contained in 'drums', of a man-made solid system.

Rhythm, vibration and disruption are key factors here. Thermodynamically induced vibrations and intervals interrupt the world of dreamy contemplation and mediocre cultural

⁹⁴ Robert Denomé, 'The Theme of Disintegration in Flaubert's *Éducation sentimentale*', *Kentucky Romance Quarterly*, 20 (1973), 163-71 (p. 164).

⁹⁵ 'Point de rosée: température à laquelle une vapeur, sous une pression donnée, laisse déposer sa première goutte de liquide' (Petit Robert).

production, and fulfil the same role as the debris of modern life: the music of the harpist – no *excursion maritime* being complete without a band to drown out the sound of the engine, as Turner no doubt discovered on his trips down the Thames to Margate – is disrupted by repetitive mechanical noises:

C'était une romance orientale, où il était question de poignards, de fleurs et d'étoiles; les battements de la machine coupaient la mélodie à fausse mesure; il pinçait plus fort: les cordes vibraient; et leurs sons métalliques semblaient exhiler des sanglots et comme la plainte d'un amour orgueilleux et vaincu.

(p. 7)

All material phenomena are equalised in a numbing regularity. It is in such *battements*, in 'petites vibrations intérieures', passed on from material object to material object, and between 'industry' and 'art', without discrimination, that we may find a useful connection between thermodynamics and the apprehension of the world by the individual. As Jean Starobinski enquires, 'La vibration n'est-elle pas, dans le monde flaubertien, la limite asymptotique où tendent à se réunir les phénomènes de la matière et ceux de la vie sensorielle?'.⁹⁶ In the case of the *Ville-de-Montereau*, and importantly, in parts of the novel not explicitly concerned with movement, by means mechanised or otherwise, it is indeed the unremitting repetition, vibration and oscillation caused by variation of temperature within matter, which constantly interfere with dreams, and render communication and meaningful human interaction impossible. 'On entendait par intervalles le bruit de charbon de terre dans le fourneau, un éclat de voix, un rire' (p. 6): no actual words are intelligible here, and there is no necessary relationship between them; they are merely reported; it is as if they have been consumed by the fire of the boiler, so that information is rendered

⁹⁶ Jean Starobinski, 'L'Échelle des températures: Lecture du corps dans *Madame Bovary*', *Le Temps de la réflexion*, I (1980), 145-83, repr. in *Travail de Flaubert*, ed. G. Genette et T. Todorov (Paris: Seuil, 1983), pp. 45-78 (p. 60).

disconnected and meaningless.

The disruption of dreamy contemplation by matter is also common to the descriptions of steam trains in the novel. Frédéric, on his way to Arnoux's factory (and wife) at Creil, 'perdu dans cette langueur que donne l'excès même de l'impatience', as we have seen, apprehends the slow motion of the landscape rather than the rapid motion of the vehicle; only the waste matter from the steam engine is visible, animated in contrast to Frédéric's immobility:

[L]a fumée de la locomotive versait toujours du même côté ses gros flocons qui dansaient sur l'herbe quelque temps, puis se dispersaient.

(p. 192)

In an earlier version, the 'gros flocons' 'se dissipaient'; it is dispersal which now underlines the centrality of fragmentation to Frédéric's languid contemplation.⁹⁷ It is as if contemplative psychological processes, taking the form of dissipation of psychic energy, are always accompanied by some type of visible, material result (as well as by movement which is essentially fluid). Matter may disrupt dreams, but dreams seem also, in roundabout fashion, to be connected to the generation of more matter, while leaving their dreamer no less out of touch with reality.

When Frédéric contemplates the landscape at Andilly, it is again the fragmenting material by-product of steam-driven transport, rather than the exoticism or even the point-to-point displacement of 'travel', which is described:

⁹⁷ See p. 546, *variante e* (from the original 1869 edition, published by Michel Lévy). The choice of 'dispenser' would seem to be more appropriate to smoke, based in matter, rather than to steam, subject to 'dissipation'. This underlines the contrast with the essential fluidity of the movement of the train, highlighted by the use of the verb 'glisser'.

[E]t quelquefois, la fumée d'une locomotive allongeait horizontalement, au pied des collines couvertes de feuillages, comme une gigantesque plume d'autruche dont le bout léger s'envolait.

(p. 389)

Elsewhere in the novel, the experience of modernity and reality constantly comes into conflict with romantic idealism and exoticism. This conflict very often results in a confusion complicated by the presence of a 'thermodynamic' motif, or some echo of the thermodynamic functioning of the steamboat.

One instance of what might be termed 'virtual' thermodynamic movement is provided by Frédéric's visit to Arnoux's house in Part I, Chapter 5, when confusion over Marie's unexotic origins and Arnoux's missed destination results in speechlessness, and the generation, accompanied by circular motion, of what is not specified as being either breath or smoke, dream or reality:

Ils ne trouvèrent, ensuite, absolument rien à se dire. Arnoux, qui s'était fait une cigarette, tournait autour de la table, en soufflant. Frédéric, debout contre le poêle, contemplait les murs, l'étagère, le parquet; et des images charmantes défilaient dans sa mémoire, devant ses yeux plutôt.

(p. 64)⁹⁸

Frédéric, in close proximity to a heat source firing the engine of his 'dioramic' perception of phenomena, is not sure whether he is merely projecting from memory or actually viewing the procession of a series of idealised images which replace the continuity of

⁹⁸ It is to be recalled that on the *Ville-de-Montereau*, Arnoux's first appearance, during which he holds forth on such various issues as the efficiency of steam boilers, travel, women and tobacco is accompanied by the distribution of smoking material (pp. 4-5). See P. A. Tipper, 'Frédéric's "Pro-Coital" Cigarette: Causal Indeterminacy in *L'Éducation sentimentale*', *Neophilologus*, 80 (1996), 225-41, for a discussion of the 'subtly allusive network of tobacco imagery in the novel' (p. 226). Compare also another occasion where circular motion and the rolling of a cigarette are bound up with the integrity (or lack of it) of Frédéric's dream world. When it appears that Mme Arnoux is offering herself to Frédéric, 'tout à la fois par prudence et pour ne pas dégrader son idéal, il tourna sur ses talons et se mit à faire une cigarette' (p. 423). As in the Arnoux episode, the cigarette is accompanied by contemplation ('Elle le contemplait, tout émerveillée') and incommunicability ('il continuait à marcher, tout en fumant. Tous les deux ne trouvaient plus rien à se dire', p. 424).

surfaces constituting the interior of the room. Again, persistent afterimages parade before him; this time, it is not rapid movement but proximity to a heat source which brings the effect about.

When Frédéric does eventually locate Mme Arnoux, he soon finds himself with her in an opaque urban fog which he manages to transform into a sea mist:

A cause du pavé glissant, ils oscillaient un peu; il lui semblait qu'ils étaient tous les deux comme bercés par le vent, au milieu d'un nuage.

(p. 67)

Frédéric's imagination exploits the visual impenetrability of the atmosphere, and the result of his and Mme Arnoux's physical (and again, fluid) contact with the modern 'voie publique', to create a pre-modern 'lieu commun'.⁹⁹ He longs to be 'bercé par le vent' in a merely mechanical age where 'oscillation' of a different kind is the basis of movement. The oscillation characteristic of water and tides is much preferable to that of steam engines such as the one on the only boat where he has actually seen Mme Arnoux. The exotic journey which he projects from his apprehension of flora in the Jardin des Plantes, on which he and Mme Arnoux travel, non-thermodynamically ('au dos des dromadaires') and privately ('dans la cabine d'un yacht'), contrasts with the mediocrity of the public transport constituting the only reality they have experienced together. Movement is idealised within the classical paradigm.

Movement, it would seem, particularly by public transport, has the capacity constantly to provoke Frédéric into imagining grand visions, such as when he travels by

⁹⁹ See Victor Brombert, 'De Novembre à L'Éducation: Communication et voie publique', *Revue d'Histoire Littéraire de la France*, 81 (1981), 563-72. Brombert establishes strong links between incommunicability, cliché and movement on the public thoroughfare.

coach to Paris at the beginning of Part II:

Quand il fut à sa place, dans le coupé, au fond, et que la diligence s'ébranla, emportée par les cinq chevaux détalant à la fois, il sentit une ivresse le submerger. Comme un architecte qui fait le plan d'un palais, il arrangea, d'avance, sa vie. Il l'emplit de délicatesses et de splendeurs; elle montait jusqu'au ciel; une prodigalité de choses y apparaissait; et cette contemplation était si profonde, que les objets extérieurs avaient disparu.

(p. 103)

Here, as in the 'américaine' from Montereau to Nogent, his life, which should be an intangible and unquantifiable entity, is merely a Babel-like aggregate of disparate phenomena. This journey is contemplated initially in terms of a sea voyage, which however is one which progressively takes on the appearance of mechanization:

La lanterne, suspendue au siège du postillon, éclairait les croupes des limoniers. Il n'apercevait au-delà que les crinières des autres chevaux qui ondulaient comme des vagues blanches; leurs haleines formaient un brouillard de chaque côté de l'attelage; les chaînettes de fer sonnaient, les glaces tremblaient dans leur châssis; et la lourde voiture, d'un train égal, roulait sur sur le pavé.

(p. 103)

The horses' manes may be like waves, but the description of their respiration might be interpreted as a point of transition between pre-modern and modern travel, between romantic exoticism and modern reality. That is, the 'brouillard' is at once a sea fog fitting into the journey by sailing ship, and a fog composed of particles of matter resulting from the movement of a vehicle producing noise through the vibrations of metal and glass – the two essential components of the architecture of modernity – and which is only perceptible on account of artificial light. This vehicle's grounding in reality, its gravity binding it to the earth, is clear by the end of the sentence.

In the suburbs, nature and modernity are in conflict, and as the carriage progresses further into the city, the industrial (factory chimneys, smoke) and the pre-industrial (the Panthéon, the signs of independent artisans) mingle. 'Des établissements chimiques alternaient avec des chantiers de marchands de bois'. A profusion of forms of movement

associated with different trades passes by, which, in combination with water, temperature. light and matter-based gas, conjure up the familiar romantic image of Mme Arnoux:

Des ouvriers en blouse passaient, et des haquets des brasseurs, des fourgons de blanchisseuses, des carioles des bouchers; une pluie fine tombait, il faisait froid, le ciel était pâle, mais deux yeux qui valaient pour lui le soleil resplendissaient derrière la brume.
(p. 104)

Despite the pollution and dissipation of energy caused by the industry and movement of the modern world, the universal source of energy constituted by his image of Mme Arnoux (centripetal 'point lumineux où l'ensemble des choses convergeait', in a world constituted in reality by disparate, centrifugal phenomena) is not, as far as Frédéric is concerned, in any danger of burning out. It may be cold outside, the sky may be pale, but the heat from the source which Frédéric values as much as the sun provides a thermal potential difference facilitating the continued functioning of his imaginative transports, which in turn generate further narrative activity.

The subsequent lull in movement at the *barrière* can also be considered in thermodynamic terms (with musical undertones):

Le factionnaire, la capote rabattue, allait et venait devant sa guérite pour se réchauffer. Le commis de l'octroi grimpa sur l'impériale, et une fanfare de cornet à pistons éclata. On descendit le boulevard au grand trot, les palonniers battants, les traits flottants.
(pp. 104-05)

The back-and-forth movement of the official (his weather-resistant attire akin to that of a carriage) in order to generate heat energy recalls that of the captain on board the *Ville-de-Montereau*, and resembles that of a piston in a steam-engine; indeed, it is sound produced by a piston-governed device which finally sets the vehicle in motion. Movement then immediately resumes as if it had not been interrupted at all. Modern transport, in conjunction with the ancient watery artery and its accompanying 'émanations', signals

arrival in the heart of the city and Frédéric's corresponding mood change ('il eut un attendrissement en apercevant le premier fiacre'). In a build-up of 'urban energy', movement and the subject's perception of it yet again recall the static experience of the *Ville-de-Montereau* and foreshadow the random agitation of February 1848 ('Les boutiques défilaient, la foule augmentait, le bruit devenait plus fort.' (p. 105)).

On arrival, Frédéric prolongs his journey by slowing down to the least possible speed, but the build-up of energy is abruptly brought to a halt when he finds, in the rue de Choiseul, that the heat source facilitating the propulsion of his dreams has been suddenly snuffed out:

Pour faire durer son plaisir, Frédéric s'habilla le plus lentement possible, et même il se rendit à pied au boulevard Montmartre; il souriait à l'idée de revoir, tout à l'heure, sur la plaque de marbre, le nom chéri; – il leva les yeux. Plus de vitrines, plus de tableaux, rien!

(p. 105)

Motion towards a definite and known destination, made possible by a source of heat and light, has come to nothing. Now that this source is no longer providing energy, equilibrium is reached; movement from this point on is erratic, chaotic, illogical. Once Frédéric, fuelled by alcohol, has located Regimbart, catching sight of him 'à travers la fumée des pipes' (p. 109), and found a definite destination, he moves rapidly towards the 'source chaude' represented by Mme Arnoux along the shortest possible path, 'comme soulevé par un vent tiède et avec l'aisance extraordinaire que l'on éprouve dans les songes'. Thus elevated, he finds himself 'à un second étage, devant une porte dont la sonnette retentissait' (echoing other bells which ring in accompaniment to thermodynamic processes elsewhere in the novel), and finds Mme Arnoux 'assise, près du feu'. Indeed, the whole Arnoux family, including its newest member, is gathered round the fireplace, as if the heat, like that of a

serre chaude, has enhanced its reproductive capacity. The sight of such domestic banality, a far cry from the inflated vision of the *Ville-de-Montereau*, combined with the knowledge that Arnoux has become a mere pot-peddler, causes Frédéric's passion to burn out again. 'Une bouillotte chauffait dans les charbons', and the direction of Mme Arnoux's gaze is directed towards the ashes, her physical contact with her son as if reinforcing her loss of uniqueness in Frédéric's eyes. Heat loss through displacement has resulted in a running-down:

Frédéric s'était attendu à des spasmes de joie; – mais les passions s'étiolent quand on les dépayse, et, ne retrouvant plus Mme Arnoux dans le milieu où il l'avait connue, elle lui semblait avoir perdu quelque chose, porter confusément comme une dégradation, enfin n'être pas la même. Le calme de son cœur le stupéfiait.

(p. 110)

Not only has the running down brought about by reality engendered the banalisation of Mme Arnoux ('quelle bourgeoise!'), it has also reduced idealised Art into a collection of mass-produced and clichéd 'objets d'art'. Instead of an edifice 'qui montait jusqu'au ciel', each room filled, museum-like, with a 'prodigalité' of distinct, unique items, Frédéric is confronted, amidst 'de larges carreaux de pavage pour salles de bain et cabinets de toilette, avec sujets mythologiques dans le style de la Renaissance', by 'une double étagère, montant jusqu'au plafond', bearing not the 'délicatesses' or 'splendeurs' imagined in the *diligence*, but 'des vases à contenir la glace, des pots à fleurs, des candélabres, de petites jardinières et de grandes statuettes polychromes figurant un nègre ou une bergère pompadour' (p. 111).

The things which Frédéric and others, Arnoux especially (witness his 'encyclopaedic' discourse aboard the *Ville-de-Montereau*, interrupted by the pompous *calcul* discussed earlier), would attempt to classify and make distinct, ultimately become

equalised in their common banality, and this process of equalisation and banalisation is one of the most important features of the novel. As *The Fighting Temeraire* actualises the displacement of the 'pre-stochastic' paradigm by one in which random distribution of matter is to the fore, not only in science but in perception and representation, *L'Éducation sentimentale* disrupts any attempt at the linear ordering of narrative, and any attempts at the classification of phenomena. This is taken up more directly in *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, but is implicit throughout the earlier work. In both novels, what is expected by the protagonists is a differentiable world in which everything can be distinguished, clearly identified and classified, but what is actually experienced is a world characterised by incommunicability, obstruction, non-linearity, opaqueness, repetitive vibration, sameness, mediocrity and the foiling of the urge to tabulate. The fragmented and random narrative is as disruptive of previous representational logic as the material by-products depicted in obviously 'thermodynamic' episodes are disruptive of the atmosphere, as reality is disruptive of Frédéric's dream world, itself filled with watery, or more accurately, vaporous dreams which in turn obscure reality, so that there is a fundamental indeterminacy over what is dream and what is reality. The novel, like Turner's painting, can be read as a circular process of thermodynamic running-down and as a subversion of 'logical' representational conventions, from the first *tourbillons* to the final acceptance that linearity is a lost cause.

The coda to the novel, while seemingly disconnected from the story, is in fact a logical conclusion, the ultimate expression of the processes of desanctification which have preceded it. The realization that an abortive encounter in a brothel is the ultimate happiness which can be aspired to is perhaps indicative of a realization that all relations in the modern age (including that of Frédéric and the impecunious Deslauriers, 'obligé de le suivre' (p. 428)) are implicated in monetary exchange, and that it is a waste of time and energy to imagine otherwise. Any attempts to idealise relationships, or the socio-economic reality of

which they are part, in terms of some 'pre-lapsarian' representative filter are futile. The bourgeois epoch in which Frédéric and Deslauriers come of age is one ultimately distinguished from all earlier ones, according to Marx and Engels, by 'constant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions'. Indeed, the world depicted by *L'Éducation sentimentale*, in both its public and private spheres, and in terms of its literal and metaphorical representation of profanation, resembles very closely the one polemically described in *The Communist Manifesto*:

All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses, his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind.¹⁰⁰

One of the great ironies of capitalist modernity, however, is that the representational possibilities afforded by technology (optical, thermodynamic or otherwise) allow for the persistence of a pre-modern, 'sanctifying' world view, even if this, as in Flaubert's novel, is only to be profaned. The technology of movement in particular is central to this. The very movement which facilitates Frédéric's manipulation of what he observes to create an idealised vision of his environment comes about as a result of entropic processes embedded in modern industrial society. If, as according to Marshal Berman, Marx locates the experience of desanctification endemic to modern life 'in a world-historical context', while 'Baudelaire's poetry shows how it feels from inside', *L'Éducation sentimentale* exploits multiple and necessarily mobile perspectives to show how the interior vision which conflicts with the reality of production and exchange is itself a product of that same world-historical context, and is undermined through its functioning in accordance with the

¹⁰⁰ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, p. 83.

productive forces which the latter has unleashed.¹⁰¹ Flaubert's novel undermines the euphoric vision of modern technology as herald of fraternity and good will (as exemplified by 'la République, ou le Progrès, ou la Civilisation, sous la figure de Jésus-Christ conduisant une locomotive' (p. 302)) by juxtaposing the persistent afterimages of the classical and romantic ages with the reality of the modernity which has made their analysis possible, in a context where movement is simultaneously that of the eye and that of the world.

¹⁰¹ Berman, *All That is Solid Melts into Air*, p. 157.

Chapter Two

An Evolutionary Naturalist Intertext: The Traffic Jam as Exemplary

Taxonomic Motif

It may have not escaped notice that in the previous chapter, the first of a study purportedly about the representation of modern forms of movement in naturalist fiction, there was little mention of naturalism or its aesthetics. We have seen how the depiction of movement, and of its perception, in *L'Éducation sentimentale* figures modernity; it might be asked, then, how movement in Flaubert's novel relates to movement as depicted by later naturalist texts. This is perhaps best considered as part of the much broader question of how naturalist fiction evolves, in which movement is exploited as a point of access to the sense of development of naturalism as a genre. Rather, then, than regard Flaubert's novel as a kind of generic starting-point, it might be more appropriate to consider how it becomes incorporated into an evolving naturalist canon. Such incorporation is on the textual as much as the generic level.

The seminal status of *L'Éducation sentimentale* within naturalism is by now a commonplace, with the following utterance by Zola (in *Le Voltaire* in 1879) often marshalled as supporting evidence:

Voilà le modèle du roman naturaliste, cela est hors de doute pour moi. On n'ira pas plus loin dans la vérité vraie, je parle de de cette vérité terre à terre, exacte, qui semble être la négation même de l'art du romancier.¹

¹ Émile Zola, article in *Le Voltaire*, 1879 (on the new Charpentier edition of *L'Éducation sentimentale*), *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Henri Mitterand, 15 vols (Paris: Cercle du Livre Précieux, 1966-70), XII, 608. See also Yves Chevrel, "Le modèle du roman naturaliste": *L'Éducation sentimentale*, in *Mimesis et Semiosis. Miscellanées offertes à Henri Mitterand*, ed. Philippe Hamon and Jean-Pierre Leduc-Adine (Paris: Nathan, 1992), pp. 505-14.

This statement, however, while it would not be an intention of the present study to question it, perhaps says more about Zola and the driving motivation of his particular naturalist project than it does about any inherent qualities of Flaubert's novel. If mundane truth is apparently the negation of the novelist's art, it is so only on the level of individual 'realist' details, which, when brought together in systematised form so that they interact with other details, affirm an aesthetic which is greater than the sum of its parts. What is true of 'truth', of 'detail', may be true also of texts. Yves Chevrel writes that '[u]n texte naturaliste [...] se manifeste comme une vaste chaîne à laquelle l'auteur ajoute, à son gré, des maillons'.² This understanding might apply to *Les Rougon-Macquart* as an evolving 'chain' of novels; it might equally apply to the fully-evolved naturalist canon, with *L'Éducation sentimentale* as *post-hoc* 'model', to an individual novel or indeed any 'text', where an individual 'maillon' could be any textual element, from a detail or motif to a novel. What is important is that the appropriation of texts is a key strategy of naturalist fiction, and as with individual 'mimetic' details, which take on greater significance when integrated into an ensemble subjecting the reader to what David Baguley refers to as 'the scandal of [the naturalist text's] thematics', individual texts, appropriated from whatever source or model, take on full meaning when juxtaposed with others, from a range of sources. This is not to claim that intertextuality and appropriation are sole preserves of naturalism, but what is special about 'naturalist' intertextuality is that, rather than being an incidental part of the writing process, it has a specific strategic purpose, namely, to set up the naturalist text initially as being in the mimetic mould, before undermining realist mimesis to assert its own generic uniqueness. This setting of apparent parameters is especially evident, suggests Baguley, where the naturalist *incipit* is concerned; it 'introduces readers into the the familiar world of

² Yves Chevrel, *Le Naturalisme* (Paris: PUF, 1982), p. 109.

their mimetic literature, into the reassuring reflection of their own reality [...].³ As we shall see in this chapter, taking its lead from the *incipit* of *La Curée*, appropriation from other textual sources is a central feature of this process of familiarisation. However, the process whereby the familiarity of mimesis is undermined is itself also rooted in the juxtaposition of texts.

Naturalism can, after all, be regarded in a wider epistemological sense as being a literature which is an amalgam of discourses. As Baguley understatedly puts it when providing concise encyclopaedic account rather than full-blown treatise:

Balzac was the main literary model, Taine the model critic and theoretician, Comte and Claude Bernard the intellectual mentors of the scientific age to which Zola linked the movement.⁴

Similarly, for Chevrel, naturalism can be seen as a synthesis of disparate elements:

Zola, qui a tout fait pour populariser le naturalisme, peut bien, en effet, être défini comme le lieu géométrique où viennent s'inscrire les tendances de toute une époque, du moins de tout un courant de pensée et de toute une pratique (littéraire). Plus qu'un exemple ou même qu'un pionnier qu'on suit plus ou moins bien, il est un modèle, au sens technique du terme.⁵

In this technical sense, being a model is as much about actively bringing together existing writing as about influencing new writing. Zola's work, then, might be considered a defining model *of*, as well as an influential model *for*, the naturalist text, especially in the sense that it unremittingly incorporates and reworks models of discourse. So if *L'Éducation sentimentale* is a model, for instance, perhaps this is because it is ransacked, because 'des maillons' are extracted from it and linked to Zola's particular naturalist chain, which is the

³ David Baguley, *Naturalist Fiction: The Entropic Vision* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 179.

⁴ David Baguley, 'Naturalism', in *The New Oxford Companion to Literature in French*, ed. by Peter France (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 558.

⁵ Chevrel, *Le Naturalisme*, p. 31.

overarching model. And where naturalism is an influential model, it does not necessarily turn its 'influencés' into Naturalists. As Chevrel points out, for many writers (among whom one might group, for example, Huysmans or Maupassant), a 'naturalist' work was just a stage in their literary evolution.⁶ Such a model, then, might be placed at any point of an evolutionary process, rather than merely at its origin. Or indeed, naturalism is not just the hypertrophied fag-end of realism cobbled together during the Third Republic, but, to quote Zola himself, 'le siècle entier, le mouvement de l'intelligence contemporaine, la force qui nous emporte'.⁷ Evolution is a defining characteristic of naturalism, as well as, in its hereditary sense, a key motif. Now, the 'evolutionary' motif in Zola, informed to a considerable extent by his reading of Prosper Lucas, and made explicit in the *Rougon-Macquart* family tree, reproduces itself implicitly everywhere in the multiple taxonomies present in the novels. One fairly typical example of such taxonomic enumeration, to be discussed in the present chapter, is the traffic jam, of interest also as a significant feature of urban modernity. Taking the traffic jam as a point of access to the way in which naturalist fiction evolves as a genre, it may be possible to suggest that the naturalist text becomes and works as a naturalist text because of the interaction of other texts already in existence, which may not be 'naturalist' as such, but which contain elements of accumulated (and still-accumulating) intelligence on late nineteenth-century France ripe for exploitation by naturalism.

This should hardly be surprising, either, on the level of individual novels; a key feature of Zola's fiction is already the apparently deterministic interaction of different strands of discourse on human behaviour and environment. Naomi Schor observes, for

⁶ Chevrel, *Le Naturalisme*, p. 49.

⁷ Émile Zola, 'Le Naturalisme au théâtre', in *Le Roman expérimental* (1880; Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1971), pp. 137-73 (p. 143).

example, that ‘topography, history and biology all condemn Zola’s characters to a life where free will is powerless to act, to bring about change’.⁸ The case of *La Curée*, in particular, highlights how the representation of topographical, historical (or at least socio-historical) and natural phenomena in terms of each other is central to the occasioning of seemingly ‘inevitable’ consequences by the equally ‘inevitable’ actions of fictional protagonists, which require explanations other than the ‘destiny’ posited by earlier genres. On the one, ‘social’, level, the novel can be read as an account of the corrupting effects on public morality of the frantic property free-for-all central to Second Empire urbanism, whereby, as the synopsis provided by *Le Docteur Pascal* relates, appetites go out of control ‘dès le début de la curée chaude, dans le coup de vent de la spéculation à outrance soufflant par la ville’.⁹ On a ‘natural’ level, this is paralleled by and intertwined with private moral degeneration, in an environment where private spaces echo the public spaces of Haussmann’s Paris, where indeed they do not overlap, given that this novel is on so many levels emblematic, for Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson, of ‘la privatisation du public’.¹⁰ Two specific locations illustrate very well the implicit and often explicit links between spatial context and fictional outcome, and, in this case, between physical, social and moral space, and facility or limitation of movement within space according to social and, indeed, gender, criteria. Both spaces, namely the Bois de Boulogne and the home of Aristide Saccard, are described in detail in the opening chapter, and are clearly mutually dependent. The former is the scene of a traffic jam, the latter of a display of conspicuous wealth and of what can

⁸ Naomi Schor, ‘Zola: From Window to Window’, *Yale French Studies*, 42 (1969), 38-51 (p. 51).

⁹ Émile Zola, *Le Docteur Pascal* (1893), in *Les Rougon-Macquart. Histoire naturelle et sociale d’une famille sous le Second Empire*, ed. Henri Mitterand, 5 vols (Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1960-67), V (1967), 913-1220 (p. 1009). This edition hereinafter referred to by volume and page number in the text.

¹⁰ Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson, ‘Mobilité et Modernité dans *La Curée*’, *Les Cahiers naturalistes*, 67 (1993), 73-81 (p. 78).

only be described as ‘garden furniture’.

Traffic Jams

We shall return presently to the appropriateness of the latter designation, which can only really become clear after consideration first of all of (among other matters) this novel’s *incipit* as a discourse of checked vehicular mobility – one which is by no means unique to Zola. In the detailed enumeration of vehicles which is found in the opening episode of the novel, human beings are mentioned in the same stroke as their means of conveyance, so that an instant of immobility yields a snapshot of middle-class society in terms of its chosen forms of transport. Indeed, ‘tout Paris était là’:

[L]a duchesse de Sternich, en huit-ressorts; Mme de Lauwerens, en victoria très correctement attelée; la baronne de Meinhold, dans un ravissant cab bai-brun; la comtesse Vanska, avec ses poneys pie; Mme Daste, et ses fameux stappers noirs; Mme de Guende et Mme Teissière, en coupé; la petite Sylvia dans un landau gros bleu. Et encore don Carlos, en deuil, avec sa livrée antique et solonelle; Selim pacha, avec son fez et sans son gouverneur; la duchesse de Rozan, en coupé-égoïste, avec sa livrée poudrée à blanc; M. le comte de Chibray, en dog-cart; M. Simpson, en mail de la plus belle tenue; toute la colonie américaine. Enfin deux académiciens, en fiacre.¹¹

No individual here is mentioned without reference to a specific type of vehicle, or in some cases, of animal. Each is singled out, classified according to certain exterior qualities in what appears to be the pseudo-Linnaean, and often self-parodic taxonomic manner characteristic of the *Rougon-Macquart* cycle. However, this extract does not quite perhaps qualify as self-parody; *La Curée* is, after all, only the second novel of a series which at the time of the former’s writing was still envisaged as comprising ten novels. It might be argued, rather, that it parodies popular journalistic representation of *le grand monde* at its

¹¹ Zola, *La Curée* (1871), I (1960), 317-599 (p. 320).

leisure; as Henri Mitterand points out, the passage resembles almost word for word a clipping Zola made from an 1870 'Échos de Paris' column in *Le Figaro*, citation of the first few lines of which should suffice to illustrate its close resemblance to the passage in the novel:

Avec le soleil, toute la haute gentry s'est montrée hier au bois de Boulogne. Citons au passage: la princesse de Metternich, en huit-ressorts; madame de Mercy-Argenteau, en victoria très correctement attelée; la baronne de Rothschild, sur un ravissant cab bai-brun; la comtesse Walewska, avec ses poneys pie; madame Olympe Aguado, et ses fameux stappers noirs [...].¹²

What this appropriation might suggest is that texts by other authors can be integrated seamlessly into Zola's narrative. On the one hand, the inclusion of a text such as this one, superficially reworked from another, and plausibly a standard, even clichéd, late Second Empire account of such an *encombrement* with the style of which contemporary readers would be familiar, testifies to the 'documentary realism' of the discourse into which it is transplanted.¹³ On the other, it indicates that the point of view and persona of the narrator are subtly being flagged as not necessarily being Zola's, or indeed consistent with that of the narrator or narrators. That is, the *Rougon-Macquart* cycle in its immediate post-embryonic stage is already 'polyphonic' in character, in the sense that there is not just one narrative voice, but that the narrative is a composite of many different and often contradictory voices, gradually accumulating towards a textual end yet to be fully determined, but at least enshrined within a ten-novel plan and rooted, as it were, in a hereditary plot.

¹² 'Échos de Paris', *Le Figaro*, 10.4.1870, Bibliothèque Nationale, Nouvelles acquisitions françaises, 10282. f° 390, cited by Mitterand, in I, 1584.

¹³ On the clichéd status of such depictions, and indeed of the promenade in the Bois de Boulogne, see Hervé Maneglier, *Paris Impérial. La Vie quotidienne sous le Second Empire* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1990), p. 155.

Of this crucial early novel, the first in the cycle to be set in Paris, and the chief subject of which is the transformation of *immobilier* into *mobilier*, Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson observes that '[the] mobility encouraged by the transformation of the city [...] provides the model for relations in every domain'.¹⁴ And already in the novel's earliest stages, facility of movement is central to the depiction of human beings and the social relations which exist between them. When movement actually does occur in the Bois de Boulogne, the social relations of a society in movement remain static, and distinctions between individuals lose their importance; displacement may occur, but there is no change in distance between the separate sections of society being displaced: 'le défilé alla, dans les mêmes bruits, dans les mêmes lueurs, sans cesse et d'un seul jet, comme si les premières voitures eussent tiré toutes les autres après elles' (I, 321). The only irregular motion here, which disturbs that of the *défilé*, is that of perceived social or sexual deviants, such as 'les deux inséparables' suspected of being lesbian lovers, whose motion diverges from that of the others:

[I]l y eut une secousse dans le trot régulier de la file des voitures. Et, levant la tête, [Renée] salua deux jeunes femmes couchées côte à côte, avec une langueur amoureuse, dans un huit-ressorts qui quittait à grand fracas le bord du lac pour s'éloigner par une allée latérale.
(I, 322)

Otherwise, individuals in society seem capable of assuming distinct identities only when static. Movement in space has a definite moral and social significance.

While the descriptive motifs here might appear to be part of a coherent and consciously-chosen frame of reference which pervades the novel, if not eventually the entire *Rougon-Macquart* cycle, they have their independent, 'pre-naturalist' antecedents (as well as naturalist successors), whether these be journalistic (as seen above), literary or

¹⁴ Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson, *Paris as Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), p. 134.

artistic. Baudelaire, for instance, in the section of *Le Peintre de la vie moderne* devoted to 'Les Voitures', directly following that on 'Les Femmes et les Filles', reports Constantin Guys's depiction of vehicles and horses. If Baudelaire identifies in the former section a taxonomic hierarchy of women, this is somewhat paralleled in the latter, so that different women can be linked with different conveyances and animals:

Dans cette particulière série de dessins se reproduisent sous mille aspects les incidents du sport, des courses, des chasses, des promenades dans les bois, les *ladies* orgueilleuses, les frères *misses*, conduisant d'une main sûre des coursiers d'une pureté de galbe admirable, coquets, brillants, capricieux eux-mêmes comme des femmes.¹⁵

Of greatest interest to Guys (and indeed to Baudelaire, or, if the essay is to be read as a manifesto, to any would-be painter of modern life) are large groupings of vehicles, horses and people:

Tantôt ce sont des haltes et, pour ainsi dire, des campements de voitures nombreuses, d'où, hissés sur les coussins, sur les sièges, sur les impériales, des jeunes gens sveltes et des femmes accoutrés des costumes excentriques autorisés par la saison assistent à quelque solennité du turf qui file dans le lointain; tantôt un cavalier galope gracieusement à côté d'une calèche découverte, et son cheval a l'air, par ses courbettes, de saluer à sa manière. La voiture emporte au grand trot, dans une allée zébrée d'ombre et de lumière, les beautés couchées comme dans une nacelle, indolentes, écoutant vaguement les galanteries qui tombent dans leur oreille et se livrant avec paresse au vent de la promenade.¹⁶

This text itself perhaps recalls the already clichéd status of the carriage as luxurious locus of middle-class *galanterie*, as featured (emulated?) in *Madame Bovary* and elsewhere. Another *lieu commun* is attire. If the overflowing quality of female dress is not already a cliché in Baudelaire or Guys ('La fourrure ou la mousseline leur monte jusqu'au menton et déborde comme une vague par-dessus la portière.'), its reappearance in *La Curée* perhaps

¹⁵ Charles Baudelaire, *Le Peintre de la vie moderne* (1859-60), in *Œuvres*, ed. Y.-G. Le Dantec (Paris: Gallimard, 1951), pp. 873-912 (p. 910)

¹⁶ Baudelaire, *Le Peintre de la vie moderne*, op. cit., pp. 910-11.

highlights it as such ('les toilettes riches débordant des portières'). Similarly, there would appear to be a preordained code of deportment for footmen and other servants:

Les domestiques sont roides et perpendiculaires, inertes et se ressemblant tous; c'est toujours l'effigie monotone et sans relief de la servilité, ponctuelle, disciplinée; leur fonction est de n'en point avoir. Au fond, le bois verdoie ou roussit, poudroie ou s'assombrit, suivant l'heure et la saison. Ses retraites se remplissent de brumes automnales, d'ombres bleues, de rayons jaunes, d'effulgences rosées, ou de minces éclairs qui hachent l'obscurité comme des coups de sabre.¹⁷

In *La Curée*, the driver and footman strike the same rigid, uniform and unflappable pose:

[D]ans la clarté rousse qui les éclairait par derrière, et qui faisait luire les boutons de cuivre de leurs capotes à demi pliées, retombant du siège, le cocher et le valet de pied, avec leur livrée bleu sombre, leurs culottes mastic et leurs gilets rayés noir et jaune, se tenaient raides, graves et patients, comme des laquais de bonne maison qu'un embarras de voitures ne parvient pas à fâcher.

(I, 319)

'Comme' here would indicate the existence of a code of expected behaviour by such people in such circumstances, by implication familiar. Interestingly, also, Zola's footmen adopt in their dress the yellows and dark blues which in Baudelaire/Guys are bestowed on the wood, which 'roussit' in the former extract and which is lit by a 'clarté rousse' in the latter. The locus of Guys's depiction of vehicles is 'ces paysages familiers et intimes qui font la parure circulaire d'une grande ville, et où la lumière jette des effets qu'un artiste vraiment romantique ne peut pas dédaigner'. And indeed, if Zola's work is not quite that of an 'artiste romantique', these effects are everywhere present in the description of the *encombrement* in the Bois, which, as in Baudelaire's account, is an essential part of the city, rather than merely an adjunct to it. Inasmuch as Zola's *encombrement* is represented by means of taxonomies of vehicles in turn linked with taxonomies of people and animals,

¹⁷ Baudelaire, *Le Peintre de la vie moderne*, op. cit., p. 911.

so that ultimately, Second Empire society can be represented, Guys's depictions of vehicles and their occupants are, for Baudelaire, laudable as 'paintings of modern life' for their very interchangeability with depictions of other classifiable groups of objects, whether these be, as already mentioned, women and horses, or indeed, seagoing vessels:

M.G. dessine et peint une voiture, et toutes les espèces de voitures, avec le même soin et la même aisance qu'un peintre de marines consommé tous les genres de navires.¹⁸

In Zola, this taxonomic potential is a key representational resource. Furthermore, it is one which relies to an extent on the recognisability of features particular to a social and historical context. On the *Rougon-Macquart* cycle as representation of a reality considered as a classifiable and classified 'magasin de documents', Philippe Hamon writes:

Décrire, c'est donc d'abord mettre en ordre, ranger, classer, délimiter, étiqueter, réduire un foisonnement amorphe à l'aide d'un certain nombre de ' tiroirs ', à l'aide d'un certain nombre de modèles et de grilles qui sont proposés par la culture de l'époque, et qui rendront ce réel intelligible. L'œuvre-magasin, comme le magasin, ne se conçoit que rangée.¹⁹

In the same way that members of taxonomic groups are interchangeable with others, so too can texts from different genres be incorporated into a naturalist scheme of representation, so that a naturalist text is a compendium of texts as much as of classified and historically specific items of information. This is particularly true of texts which are themselves rich in taxonomic features.

One important such text, itself another precursor of the episode in the Bois, is the description of the second 'embarras des voitures' of *L'Éducation sentimentale* (in Part II, Chapter IV). Superficial similarities between the two extracts are so striking as to suggest

¹⁸ Baudelaire, *Le Peintre de la vie moderne*, op. cit., p. 911.

¹⁹ Philippe Hamon, *Le Personnel du roman. Le système des personnages dans les Rougon-Macquart d'Emile Zola* (Geneva: Droz, 1983), p. 33.

wholesale transposition by Zola of elements of one to the other. This particular episode can be read as an exposition of several different yet often interlinked taxonomies, as indeed can the novel as a whole. On the novel's characters, for instance, Pierre Bourdieu comments:

Comme s'il avait voulu exposer aux forces du champ [littéraire] un ensemble d'individus possédant, dans des combinaisons différents, les aptitudes qui représentaient à ses yeux les conditions de la réussite sociale, Flaubert 'construit' donc un groupe d'adolescents tel que chacun de ses membres soit uni à chacun des autres et séparé de tous les autres par un ensemble de similitudes et de différences distribuées de manière à peu près systématique [...].²⁰

The upshot of this is a 'naturalist' setting of initial conditions ('les atouts sont distribués. La partie peut commencer'), to which systematic taxonomy is central. Flaubert's characters, while themselves part of a taxonomy, are in turn immersed in systematised environments described in terms of taxonomies.²¹ The 'champ littéraire' is in many ways a system of pre-existent categories through which the 'trajectoires' of Flaubert's characters are examined. Furthermore, the physical space of Paris, '*cet espace structuré et hiérarchisé*', can be read as a metaphor for the social space in which '*les trajectoires sociales ascendantes et descendantes se distinguent*'.²² It is not very difficult, in this light, to consider the hierarchy of vehicles, and movement in them, as being potentially highly suggestive in terms of the structure of social relations.

On the way to the race meeting in the Champ de Mars, then, a topographically detailed listing of Parisian monuments apprehended from the moving perspective of a hired *berline* is counterpoised with Rosanette's display of ignorance of more exotic geography, prompted, presumably, by the linking of the '*cèdre dans un jardin*' with the country which

²⁰ Pierre Bourdieu, *Les Règles de l'Art. Genèse et structure du champ littéraire* (Paris: Seuil, 1992), pp. 28-29.

²¹ Bourdieu, *Les Règles de l'Art*, p. 33.

²² Bourdieu, *Les Règles de l'Art*, p. 71, emphasis in original.

it unproblematically signifies.²³ The naming of individuals in accordance with a parallel enumeration of vehicles occurs prior to the *après*-race traffic jam, but not before a similarly enumerative outline of the clothes worn by spectators and participants. In terms of mobile entertainment, the spectacle of the race meeting is on the same level as 'le plaisir tout nouveau d'une excursion maritime' described in the opening chapter of the novel; it engenders in the viewing public 'de la révérence pour ce divertissement encore nouveau'. In an echo of the *Ville-de-Montereau*, a concern with the attire of the assembled throng is expressed:

Le public des courses, plus spécial dans ce temps-là, avait un aspect moins vulgaire; c'était l'époque des sous-pieds, des collets de velours et des gants blancs.²⁴

As in the novel's opening chapter, the era described is distanced from the time of narration through commentary on the dress code appropriate to particular circumstances. There are hints of a correspondence between the 'système de la mode', as it were, in operation, and botanical considerations; the women 'faisaient comme de grands massifs de fleurs, tachetés de noir, ça et là, par les sombres costumes des hommes'.²⁵ Different commodities on sale are enumerated, as are, by their exotic names, the horses in the first race, whose riders remain anonymous, distinguished only by the colours of their jerseys.

Soon the criterion for classification becomes vehicles, and the first linking of a vehicle to an individual is that of a recurrently appearing and disappearing *milord* with

²³ The choice of the Champ de Mars, venue for *fêtes révolutionnaires*, as location for this episode, no doubt ironically foreshadows (like so much else) the events of 1848. See John Renwick, 'Fêtes révolutionnaires', in *The New Oxford Companion to Literature in French*, ed. by Peter France, pp. 309-10. These *fêtes* were 'uniformly fervent affairs. With their classical décor, pealing bells, patriotic songs, stirring speeches, fraternal embraces, and solemn oath-taking, their military formations, flags, drums, bugles, clarion calls, and cannonades, they constantly appealed to the senses and the emotions' (p. 309).

²⁴ Gustave Flaubert, *L'Éducation sentimentale* (1869), ed. by P. M. Wetherill (Paris: Garnier, 1984), p. 204. This edition hereinafter referred to as *ES* with page numbers in the text.

²⁵ cf *ES*, p. 6: 'ça et là, quelque gilet à châle laissait voir une chemise de calicot, maculée de café'.

Mme Arnoux (whose first manifestation, it is to be recalled, is ‘comme une apparition’), on whom Frédéric has half-heartedly sworn vengeance after their uncomfortable encounter in Creil in the previous chapter (*ES*, p. 202). Initially, however, to Frédéric, that it is she is only apparent:

A cent pas de lui, dans un cabriolet milord, une dame parut. Elle se penchait en dehors de la portière, puis se renfonçait vivement; cela recommença plusieurs fois, Frédéric ne pouvait distinguer sa figure. Un soupçon le saisit, il lui sembla que c'était Mme Arnoux.

(*ES*, pp. 205-06)

Frédéric appears more interested in the vehicle than in its presumed passenger, attempting to escape the company of Rosanette and Cisy ‘pour rejoindre le milord’, and, on failing to do so, stands smoking next to Cisy, ‘tout en cherchant à découvrir ce que le milord était devenu’. The identification of individuals with carriages is soon extended to other women present:

La vieille Georgine Aubert, celle qu'un vaudevilliste appelait le Louis XI de la prostitution, horriblement maquillée et poussant de temps à autre une espèce de rire pareil à un grognement, restait tout étendue dans sa longue calèche, sous un palatine de martre comme en plein hiver. Mme de Remoussot, mise à la mode par son procès, trônait sur le siège d'un break en compagnie d'Américains; et Thérèse Bachelu, avec son air de vierge gothique, emplissait de ses douze falbalas l'intérieur d'un escargot qui avait, à la place du tablier, une jardinière pleine de roses.

(*ES*, p. 207)

A slight digression might be made from Flaubert at this stage to point out that not only is this extract recalled by Zola's (or indeed rather, *Le Figaro's*) enumeration; also, importantly, it contains another element found in both the Baudelaire text preceding it and *La Curée*, namely the motif of overflowing female attire (‘[Renée] attira à elle le coin de la peau d'ours qui emplissait l'intérieur de la voiture de la nappe de neige soyeuse’ (I, 321)). What is noticeable throughout this episode in Flaubert's novel, as in both the other works mentioned here, is the interchangeability of different taxonomies, whether it be clothes,

jockeys, horses, monarchs, prostitutes, madonnas, flowers. Even the ‘gentlemen’ who recognise Rosanette can be classified in different yet uncontradictory ways, either by name (‘Elle [...] répondait [à leurs saluts] en disant leurs noms à Frédéric’), or by aristocratic rank (‘C’étaient tous comtes, vicomtes, ducs et marquis’).

Amid this proliferation of taxonomic categories, the linking of Mme Arnoux to the *milord* intensifies to the point of identity: if Frédéric had been wondering what the *milord* had become, a clear answer is soon provided:

Le milord reparut, c’était Mme Arnoux. Elle pâlit extraordinairement.
 – ‘Donne-moi du champagne!’ dit Rosanette.
 Et, levant le plus haut possible son verre rempli, elle s’écria:
 – ‘Ohé là-bas! les femmes honnêtes, l’épouse de mon protecteur, ohé!’
 Des rires éclatèrent autour d’elle, le milord disparut.

(ES, p. 208)

Here, Mme Arnoux, while identified with a mode of conveyance, also becomes, for Rosanette, a representative of a particular category of women. Similarly, for Frédéric, absent-mindedly consenting to a suggestion for evening entertainment, a distinction crystallizes between two categories of love, one represented by the *berline* in which he is sitting, the other by the already-vanished but (in his eyes) still-vanishing *milord*:

– ‘Comme vous voudrez’, disait Frédéric, qui, affaissé dans le coin de la berline, regardait à l’horizon le milord disparaître, sentant qu’une chose irréparable venait de se faire et qu’il avait perdu son grand amour. Et l’autre était là, près de lui, l’amour joyeux et facile!

(ES, p. 208)

The vehicles represent also two types of women: *honnête femme* and prostitute. His presence in the *berline* perhaps indicates an uncomfortable and unacknowledged realisation (he is ‘lassé, plein de désirs contradictoires’) that he is too in some sense a prostitute – a realisation confused further by the presence of so many categories. There then appears

another vehicle, associated with yet another category of woman, the *grande dame*, in the form of Mme Dambreuse:

Alors passa devant eux, avec des miroitements de cuivre et d'acier, un splendide landau attelé de quatre chevaux, conduits à la Daumont en veste de velours, à crépines d'or. Mme Dambreuse était près de son mari, Martinon sur l'autre banquette en face; tous les trois avaient des figures étonnées.

(*ES*, pp. 208-09)

It is not even necessary for it to be stated that the Dambreuse party are actually in the landau: the vehicle's opulence is sufficient to link two causally unconnected statements. Frédéric may inwardly express surprise at being recognised, but it is only on envisaging the possibility of Mme Arnoux's reappearance (and that of her seeing him again in such undesirable company), linked with the *défilé*, which Rosanette wishes to stop and look at, that he takes decisive action and calls on the driver to get away.

Once the *défilé* is in full swing, and Frédéric and Rosanette have left the socially exclusive surroundings of the racetrack, there is an exhaustive listing of private modes of conveyance:

Et la berline se lança aux Champs-Élysées au milieu des autres voitures, calèches, briskas, wurts, tandems, tilburys, dog-carts, tapissières à rideaux de cuir où chantaient des ouvriers en goguette, demi-fortunes que dirigeaient avec prudence des pères de famille eux-mêmes. Dans des victorias bourrées de monde, quelque garçon, assis sur les pieds des autres, laissait pendre en dehors ses deux jambes. De grands coupés à siège de drap promenaient des douairières qui sommeillaient; ou bien un stepper magnifique passait, emportant une chaise, simple et coquette comme l'habit noir d'un dandy.

(*ES*, p. 209)

Again, different categories of people are highlighted in tandem with vehicles. If one were looking for understated 'social observation', one might consider the unfamiliar sight of 'des pères de familles' driving cautiously instead of hired drivers. It might even be supposed that a 'chaise', while clearly on one level a case of a vehicle being likened to an item of

clothing, is on another the accoutrement with which a 'stepper' must *de rigueur* be fitted. When the rain intensifies (in opposition to what, precisely, it is not stated, despite the 'cependant'), various categories of protection from it are listed; the same indeterminate 'on' engaged in their deployment is also the agent of a range of distant exclamatory utterances:

L'averse cependant redoublait. On tirait les parapluies, les parasols, les mackintosh; on se criait de loin: 'Bonjour! – Ça va bien ? – Oui! – Non! – A bientôt!', et les figures se succédaient avec une vitesse d'ombres chinoises.

(*ES*, p. 209)

It is not surprising that no individual can be made out clearly in the rapidly passing spectacle, in which speed is associated with obscurity; the intense classification of phenomena is somehow connected with rapid, confusing movement. The sensory experience of movement is bound up with the bewildering apprehension of a multitude of enumerated items, each part of a taxonomic system of reference. The end result of such an incessant flow of systematised information is confusion and incoherence, accompanied by a breakdown in communication:

Frédéric et Rosanette ne se parlaient pas, éprouvant une sorte d'hébétude à voir auprès d'eux, continuellement, toutes ces roues à tourner.

(*ES*, p. 209)

It is arguable that the 'roues' in question are not simply the wheels of the various vehicles, nor indeed merely representative of the various strands of society depicted in motion, but can be seen as metaphors for the many signifying systems through which reality is refracted, each operating according to a particular logic but ultimately yielding only confusion. Present here, therefore, is an implicit critique not only of the type of society depicted in the novel, but also of the way in which reality is perceived, interpreted and

represented, in terms of discrete items of information which when held in aggregate are purported to constitute knowledge or representation of the world, whereas they cannot even begin to address the world's complexity.

Such stupefaction on the part of Frédéric and Rosanette is paralleled by that of those present in the *défilé* whenever traffic comes to a halt

Par moments, les files de voitures, trop pressées, s'arrêtaient toutes à la fois sur plusieurs lignes. Alors, on restait les uns près des autres, et l'on s'examinait. Du bord des panneaux armoriés, des regards indifférents tombaient sur la foule; des yeux pleins d'envie brillaient au fond des fiacres; des sourires de dénigrement répondaient aux ports de tête orgueilleux; des bouches grandes ouvertes exprimaient des admirations imbéciles.

(ES, p. 209)

If the incoherence of Frédéric's apprehension of the world is intensified by the presence of arbitrary categories, similarly, the widening of the social hierarchy occasioned by the move of the *défilé* to the Champs-Élysées serves only to intensify the lack of cohesion of a society in which what should be animate becomes inanimate. A marginal note to a manuscript folio for this episode highlights '[des c]ontacts d'existences diverses – expressions différentes de figure – les riches les pauvres les insolentes les envieux'.²⁶ Different elements of society might be present and confronted by one another, but instead of any real interaction, there is mere coincidental contact between them which is purely visual rather than physical; such contact only reinforces existing social attitudes held by one section of society about another.

In *La Curée*, too, the 'confrontation' between different individuals in different vehicles is bereft of any contact other than the visual. There may be a wide range of signifying elements, but the multiplicity of signs is not accompanied by any real communication; there is only silence and confusion:

²⁶ B. N., N.a.f., 17605, f° 44.

Il y avait des échanges de regards muets, de portières à portières; et personne ne causait plus, dans cette attente que coupaient seuls les craquements des harnais et le coup de sabot impatient d'un cheval. Au loin, les voix confuses du Bois se mouraient.

(I. 320)

Similarly, the detail of the wheels in *L'Éducation sentimentale* is to be compared with the effects upon the individual protagonist of the (narrowly) socially representative *défilé* in *La Curée*: after the staring occupants of vehicles have witnessed the silent and motionless litany of the human, equine and vehicular components of 'tout Paris', Renée is found 'pelotonnée, retrouvant la chaleur de son coin, s'abandonnant au bercement voluptueux de toutes ces roues qui tournaient devant elle' (I, 321). This abandon prefigures Renée's behaviour in the rest of the novel; the 'roues' here might be extended to the society of whose wealth she is the self-indulgent beneficiary, but of which she will ultimately be a doomed victim. In this sense, Zola's 'roues' are part of a more coherent scheme of representation, where every organisational system is somehow interconnected with all the others.

Garden Furniture

Having examined the traffic jam and its presence in Zola's novel as an amalgam of other texts, and some evidence of its status as a standard motif in literature, criticism and journalism, it may now be instructive to consider the impact it has in *La Curée*, necessarily in conjunction with other texts, as a means of reinforcing the 'naturalist' status of the work; this might be understood in terms of what Hamon refers to as the 'volonté *décrptive*' (as opposed to 'descriptive') of the Zolian project, 'une conception du personnage et de son

milieu comme articulé (au moins) à deux niveaux superposés'.²⁷ Now in *La Curée*, the linking of Renée's surrender to the movement of her *calèche* and her resignation to the social, marital and financial circumstances which bring about her demise is strongly connected with the immersion of the traffic jam into a particular social discourse of nature. This is one which is fairly apparent in the first chapter, in the description of the 'natural' environment represented by the Bois de Boulogne. It is one, however, wherein what appears 'natural' is in fact artificial, contrived, socially determined. Furthermore, as we shall see, elements of this particular natural environment, and the discourse which enshrines it, are to be found elsewhere in the novel, in rather less 'natural' contexts.

Representations of nature in the nineteenth century are, according to Nicholas Green, essentially a function of 'Metropolitan' discourses of spatial organisation and modernity, in the sense that 'nature' is a social and cultural construct specific to a particular material situation, and is historically specific rather than transhistorically continuous.²⁸ More important than the 'natural' features of any particular text are systematic relations between texts explicitly about nature and other forms of discourse; epistemology is more important than pure aesthetics. Furthermore, space is never a neutral vacuum; its construction implicitly involves ways of reading and structures of experience which are profoundly social even when apparently private or personalised.²⁹ What Green refers to as 'the Metropolitan ideology' was not simply a mesh of discourses about the city *per se*, but necessarily incorporated a specific vision of the countryside, not least because the Metropolis was becoming increasingly defined in terms of the suburbs which were rapidly emerging around it, indeed, paradoxically, within it. So the country was inevitably defined

²⁷ Hamon, *Le Personnel du roman*, p. 35.

²⁸ Nicholas Green, *The Spectacle of Nature. Landscape and Bourgeois Culture in Nineteenth-Century France* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), p. 3.

²⁹ Green, *The Spectacle of Nature*, p. 6.

in terms of the city, and city in terms of country. And whereas the traditional sociological view of Paris in the nineteenth century, as voiced by Pinkney and others, sees the Second Empire and Haussmannisation as the key factors in the definitive metamorphosis of nineteenth-century Paris, the metropolitan vision of Paris (as indeed of other cities) was in place before Haussmann.³⁰ Indeed, 'the Metropolitan ideology preceded the full-scale emergence of French industrial capitalism'. Already, the city was the generator of the key structures of French society, especially class languages and subjectivities, so that distinct cultural personas were produced by visual and spatial dialogue.³¹ In *La Curée*, then, which is for many commentators the novel of haussmannisation – or more accurately, as for Ferguson, a novel which 'focuses neither on Paris nor yet on Paris present or future but on Paris in the making, on a Paris becoming' – before the city proper is even depicted, the 'natural' environment of the Bois de Boulogne already, irrespective of haussmannisation – or rather, precisely because this pet project of the 'empereur-jardinier' was just as much a part of the process as the *percement* of boulevards – contains much information about urban life, and about an individualistic yet regimented society whose structures are very much informed by 'metropolitanism'.³² Indeed, the Bois, as a liminal space between city and country, is an ideal locus in which artifice and nature merge. For Green, 'where city crossed with country was in those specifically urban forms of perception and consumption that shaped spatial relations as social relations'.³³ In the texts examined here, it could be argued that the converse is also true, namely that social relations are in fact depicted in terms of spatial relations. And there is not simply an opposition, but an interdependence

³⁰ David Pinkney, *Napoleon III and the Rebuilding of Paris* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958); Green, *The Spectacle of Nature*, p. 12.

³¹ Green, *The Spectacle of Nature*, p. 13.

³² Ferguson, *Paris as Revolution*, p. 117; see also Maneglier, *Paris Impérial*, pp. 151-52. on the 'empereur-jardinier' and his role in the development of the Bois de Boulogne.

³³ Green, *The Spectacle of Nature*, p. 66.

between the non-natural and the natural, between the country and the city, exterior and interior, so that boundaries between the two are blurred.

Central to this ‘blur’ are light and reflection. In *L’Éducation sentimentale*, while ‘tout se remettait en mouvement’ the effect of ‘une lumière roussâtre’ on the moving spectacle is to ‘[faire] étinceler les moyeux des roues, les poignées des portières, le bout des timons, les anneaux des sellettes’. These attributes of man-made vehicles are foregrounded, illuminated in another taxonomic enumeration, as if biological species, and the ‘grande avenue’ – centrepiece of urban artifice – is likened to ‘un fleuve où ondulaient des crinières, des vêtements, des têtes humaines’, indeed, a natural feature wherein no distinction is made between the living and the artificial elements which it comprises. Another effect of the light is that ‘les arbres tout reluisants de pluie se dressaient, comme deux murailles vertes’. Again, the natural is akin to the man-made, and an artificial boundary is imposed on human activity. Similarly, ‘le bleu du ciel’ takes on ‘des douceurs de satin’ (*ES*, pp. 209-10).

In *La Curée*, also, a ‘menagerie’ of carriages, captured in instantaneous exposure, is ‘illuminated’ by a last ray of sunlight ‘baignant d’une lumière rousse et pâlie la longue suite des voitures devenues immobiles’ (I, 319). As distinct from the effect of light on Flaubert’s moving vehicles, it is the wheels of these stationary vehicles which transmit light:

Les lueurs d’or, les éclairs vifs que jetaient les roues semblaient être fixés le long des rechapais jaune paille de la calèche, dont les panneaux gros bleu reflétaient des coins du paysage environnant.

(I, 319)

Nature and the artificial coexist here; the *calèche* of Renée and Maxime reflects ‘des coins du paysage environnant’, so that it becomes an interface between the ‘natural’ and the

artificial, social world. It is the occupants of the vehicle who, at least at this stage, are disconnected from nature, concerned with social rather than natural phenomena. They may as well be in a drawing room or an opera house, as they observe the inhabitants of other vehicles, at a similar remove from their natural surroundings, which themselves are eerily artificial. According to Anthea Callen, the late nineteenth-century concern with vision and visibility was ‘grounded in the pressing need for legible markers of social condition amidst the flux of modern urban life. Outward signs served to establish *difference*, and thus aid in the formation of social boundaries of class and gender’.³⁴ And indeed, in both *La Curée* and *L’Éducation sentimentale*, vision, as well as light, is central to the establishment of social taxonomies through vehicle codes. In Flaubert’s traffic jam, there is no ‘natural’ interaction or communication between individuals : they merely stare at each other. The only factor linking people is visibility; the side-panels of vehicles become windowsills from which the outside world can be viewed. Similarly, in *La Curée*, Renée, as if leaning from an opera box, has to resort to ‘son binocle, un binocle d’homme’ to examine Laure d’Aurigny and to establish that ‘tout Paris était là’.

In the texts discussed here, the means of movement described are not mechanised, but are no less modern for it. What is modern about movement in the nineteenth century is not necessarily its frequent mechanisation, but, at least in the urban context, its almost invariable integration into a system or network – paradoxically, since what is perhaps equally significant in terms of the modernity of an individualistic society is the notion of individual movement. The way social relations are depicted in these scenes is perhaps evocative of an almost deliberate process of ‘self-alienation’ which came about in the nineteenth-century city. According to Richard Sennett, ‘the desire to free the body from resistance is coupled with the fear of touching, a fear made evident in modern urban

³⁴ Callen, ‘Immaterial Views?’, p. 184, emphasis in original.

design'.³⁵ Movement manages to alienate the individual from the environment, as well as from other individuals. This alienation essentially has its roots in 'the challenge posed by circulation to the sense of place in revolutionary Paris' so that 'there arose in the nineteenth century urban spaces made for individuals in motion, rather than for crowds in motion'.³⁶ These 'urban spaces' included parks as well as boulevards. For Sennett, describing the shift of emphasis which took place after the French Revolution:

Nineteenth-century urban design enabled the movement of large numbers of individuals in the city, and disabled the movement of groups, groups of the threatening sort which appeared in the French revolution. The nineteenth-century urban designers drew upon their predecessors in the Enlightenment who conceived of the city as arteries and veins of movement, but put that imagery to a new use. The Enlightened urbanist had imagined individuals stimulated by movement through the city's crowds; the nineteenth-century urbanist imagined individuals protected by movement from the crowd.³⁷

One of the great projects which marked this change (along with Haussmannisation and the London Underground) was Regent's Park, designed by John Nash. This urban space was conceived, in the terms of the 'circulatory' imagery adopted in the eighteenth century, as a 'lung' (as was, for example, the Jardin des Tuileries), 'but was one which was there to facilitate movement', by means of a 'wall' of rapidly moving traffic around the park, which deterred the movement of organized groups.³⁸ More importantly, the movement which did occur 'was individualised transport – it occurred in hansoms and carriages'.³⁹ Furthermore, the park could not be considered in isolation: together with the more explicitly urban thoroughfare of Regent Street, it was necessarily part of an ensemble, and traffic in it was necessarily city traffic. According to Sennett, Nash's work prefigured Haussmannisation. However, 'much more than we know was true of Nash, [Napoléon III and Haussmann]

³⁵ Richard Sennett, *Flesh and Stone. The Body and the City in Western Civilization* (London: Faber and Faber, 1994), p. 18.

³⁶ Sennett, *Flesh and Stone*, p. 257.

³⁷ Sennett, *Flesh and Stone*, p. 324.

³⁸ Sennett, *Flesh and Stone*, p. 325.

consciously sought to privilege the motions of individuals in order to repress the movements of the urban masses'.⁴⁰

La Curée would appear to live up to this prescription, in that even when large numbers of people are depicted in motion, they are moving as individuals. A further factor in the alteration of the social conditions of travel, says Sennett, was the increase in comfort while travelling, afforded by the extension to vehicles of the same advances in domestic comfort brought about by upholsterers. One of the consequences of nineteenth-century technology, indeed, was that 'the more comfortable the moving body became, the more also it withdrew socially, travelling alone and silent'.⁴¹ What we see depicted in Zola's *défilé*, particularly in terms of the effects on Renée mentioned earlier, then, is part of this withdrawal from contact with other individuals, which continues throughout the novel. Significant also in this context is the fact that while in vehicles, and indeed on foot, 'people began to treat as their right not to be spoken to by strangers, to treat the speech of strangers as a violation'.⁴² It is not surprising, then, that the Bois de Boulogne as depicted in Zola's novel is an environment which is simultaneously rustic and urban, natural and artificial, and which at least partly on account of this ambiguous status is one in which individuals retreat from society, connected only by sight. Indeed, the occupants of vehicles in the Bois, as if waiting for a show to start or as if posing for a photograph against a background which is nothing if not 'picturesque', do not interact in any way other than by seeing and being seen; and whereas the humans are stationary, the horses can move, since they are 'natural', instinctual, and not 'social'. The humans here are removed from their indoor, artificial *milieux*, and yet paradoxically remain in them, since they are equally removed from the

³⁹ Sennett, *Flesh and Stone*, p. 327.

⁴⁰ Sennett, *Flesh and Stone*, p. 329.

⁴¹ Sennett, *Flesh and Stone*, p. 338.

⁴² Sennett, *Flesh and Stone*, p. 343.

nature which surrounds them. As Florence de Chalonge observes: 'Habitée et mobile. relativement transparente, la calèche crée une opposition entre un intérieur et un extérieur: deux mondes – sans autre intersection que le regard – cohabitent'.⁴³ Rather than simply being opposed, however, interior and exterior to an extent become one another. We can see already that although outdoors, Zola's characters behave as if indoors, and are simultaneously in public and in private. As elements of the urban spectacle, they also become part of the contrived 'natural' spectacle of the urban park, conceived itself so that nature is at no distance from the city, and is in fact urbanised, socialised.

According to Nicholas Green, the 'picturesque' in the nineteenth century is put into circulation as a set of commodities.⁴⁴ In *La Curée*, nature comes to resemble a bourgeois interior of commodified articles. What is most striking here is the manner in which the park itself is interiorised. It is most definitely an artificial and contrived 'coin de nature' in an unnatural environment, subject to 'interior decoration', as a result of which its manufactured, lifeless contents might as well be furniture, becoming *mobilier* as a function of their immobility. The imagery of water and reflection too (as in Flaubert), is crucial to the depiction by this particular discourse of nature of features of the park as the contents of a bourgeois living room.⁴⁵

[L]e lac dormait, d'une propreté de cristal, sans une écume, comme taillé nettement sur ses bords par la bêche des jardiniers; et, de l'autre côté de ce miroir clair, les deux îles, entre lesquelles le pont qui les joint faisait une barre grise, dressaient leurs falaises aimables, alignaient sur le ciel pâle les lignes théâtrales de leurs sapins, de leurs arbres aux feuillages persistant dont l'eau reflétait les verdure noires, pareilles à des franges de rideaux savamment drapées au bord de l'horizon.

(I, 322)⁴⁶

⁴³ Florence de Chalonge, 'Espace, regard et perspectives: La promenade au bois de Boulogne dans *La Curée* d'Émile Zola', *Littérature*, 65 (1987), 58-69 (p. 59).

⁴⁴ Green, *The Spectacle of Nature*, p. 95.

⁴⁵ cf. Bernard Masson, 'L'Eau et les Rêves dans "L'Éducation sentimentale"', *Europe*, 47 (1969), 82-101, repr. in Bernard Masson, *Lectures de l'imaginaire* (Paris: PUF, 1993), pp. 182-206.

⁴⁶ cf. *L'Éducation sentimentale*, p. 5: 'A chaque détour de la rivière, on retrouvait le même rideau de peupliers pâles'.

The layout of the park is in no way natural; its spatial organisation has been planned to the last detail. Light conspires with ‘Ce coin de nature, ce décor qui semblait fraîchement peint’ to create ‘un air d’adorable fausseté’. Tree-trunks become colonnettes, lawns become carpets, ‘plantés çà et là d’un bouquet de grands arbres’ (so that trees in turn become ‘carpet flowers’); the park gate is a lace curtain shielding this outsize drawing-room from the ‘exterior’, creating a semi-transparent boundary which becomes further blurred as the sun goes down. And it is in fact at this point that the boundary between nature and ‘the world’ becomes least clear. When the light, such a significant factor in the ordering of perceptions in the modern city, disappears, everything becomes hazy, including, notably, moral as well as physical boundaries. Light and colour, in their scarcity, take on moral qualities and moods, simultaneously with the withdrawal of Renée, ‘reprise par ses lassitudes’, as her carriage, paradoxically, moves back to the world. The Bois subsequently becomes part of a natural rather than social universe:

Ce grand morceau de ciel sur ce petit coin de nature, avait un frisson, une tristesse vague; et il tombait de ces hauteurs pâlissantes une telle mélancolie d’automne, une nuit si douce et si navrée, que le Bois, peu à peu enveloppé dans un linceul d’ombre, perdait ses grâces mondaines, agrandi, tout plein du charme puissant des forêts.

(I, 326)

And the full implication of what ‘nature’ is becomes clear, at least in the moral universe of this particular novel: it is a locus of divergence from social norms, and of transgression, particularly sexual transgression, untrammelled by social convention. It is the prospect of the transformation of ‘cette nature si artistement mondaine’ into ‘bois sacré’ where ‘les anciens dieux cachaient leurs amours géantes, leurs adultères et leurs incestes divins’, which brings about in Renée ‘une singulière sensation de désirs inavouables’, and sets the scene for further transgression in the novel, which, true to Zola’s subtitle for the entire cycle, relates what happens when ‘natural’ actions, determined somewhat by social factors.

but driven by primitive extra-societal urges, are placed in a social framework. Elsewhere in the novel, as here, the organisation of space has profound social and moral significance, and physical boundaries are blurred with social and moral ones. That this is part of a coherent 'naturalist' system employed throughout the novel and not isolated use of particular forms of representation of space and its boundaries becomes clear in the latter half of this opening chapter, where the detailed description of the Hôtel Saccard reflects the same confusion of interior and exterior, of inanimate and animate, of social and natural as appears in the Bois de Boulogne. Central to this naturalist topography are vision, furniture and foliage.

The Hôtel Saccard is in many respects a labyrinth of spaces and invisible boundaries which define and restrict movement (not least in terms of its being a locus for a performance of *Phèdre*, itself an appropriation of the myth of the labyrinth). Spaces are distinguished by their contents and by their accessibility. 'Tout Paris' might once again be assembled for an evening at Saccard's house, but there is only one space where access is guaranteed to all, namely the *grand salon*. The salon's defining feature is gold, which is unsurprising given the money-obsessed character of the society inhabiting it, and much of their conversation. Genuine, uninhibited private intercourse cannot occur here; other rooms are reserved for that, and distinguished most obviously here by gender, which in turn dictates the layout and decor of gender-specific spaces thus identified.

The most obviously gendered spaces in the Saccard residence are the *fumoir*, to which the men retire after dinner, and the small *salon bouton d'or*, situated at the other extremity of the larger, 'unisex' salon. These two rooms are of the same size and shape, and remote from each other. Their depiction, as we shall see, is in complete accordance with nineteenth-century notions of separate spheres, of male activity and female passivity. approval of male sexuality, censure and concealment of female sexuality. On this point, it

is interesting to note even the positioning of these rooms in the house. 'Le fumoir occupait...une des pièces rondes formées par les tourelles' (I, 349), and is actually named, whereas the other room is 'une pièce ronde dont on avait fait un adorable petit salon' (I, 350; italics added). The male space is thus active, the female space passive. The *fumoir*, 'de style...très sobre', is devoid of any frivolity perceived as feminine, and its furnishings are cylindrical, bare, exposed, and 'recouvert de peau de chagrin couleur de bois' (I, 349). In this locus of male intimacy, where confidences are divulged around the incense-bearing totem of the cigar, and where anecdotes can be related between men in their uncensored form, 'foliage' is markedly absent. There are no trees in bloom, only wood; the only leaves present are those rolled into cigars, which constitute a recurring motif of male potency and sanction of overt discussion of 'private' matters in the novel (as in the *fiacre* episode in Chapter IV, where the light of the cigar is a catalyst for Renée's and Maxime's transgression and where Renée, ordering Maxime to hold on to his cigar, declares herself to be a man. (I, 442)).⁴⁷ Maxime must relinquish his cigar before crossing the asexual grand salon, populated by ladies and 'quelques jeunes gens et des vieillards [...], ayant le tabac en horreur' (I, 349), who are, by implication, impotent. When he has reached his destination, he only gets as far as the threshold of this 'cénacle de...dames', not quite as exclusive as the *fumoir* (there is a man present, though he is asleep), but described in much greater detail, since, needless to say, there is much more detail to describe, particularly with regard to furniture. In contrast with the austere surroundings of the *fumoir*, luxury and decoration are what define the *salon bouton d'or*. Like the Bois de Boulogne before nightfall, the room is possessed of 'un charme voluptueux, d'une saveur originale et exquise'. Light creates 'une

⁴⁷ This is a recurrent motif in the nineteenth-century French novel, exploited to no meagre extent by Flaubert. See in particular P. A. Tipper, 'Frédéric's "pro-Coital" cigarette: Causal Indeterminacy in *L'Éducation sentimentale*', *Neophilologus*, 80 (1996), 225-41.

symphonie en jaune mineur' (I, 351); the interior is exteriorised into 'un coucher d'astre s'endormant sur une nappe de blés mûrs'. Most importantly, the furniture is foliated in the extreme: 'On ne voyait pas le bois de ces meubles; le satin, le capiton couvrait tout' (I, 350). What is exposed in the male space is concealed here, covered in flowers. The carpet, 'semé de feuilles sèches', becomes a lawn. The room contains every variety of decorated furniture; it is a botanical garden containing a multitude of species: 'Les causeuses, les fauteuils, les poufs, étaient recouverts de satin bouton d'or capitonné, coupé par de larges bandes de satin noir brodé de tulipes voyantes. Et il y avait encore des sièges bas, des sièges volants, toutes les variétés élégantes et bizarres du tabouret' (I, 350).

'Nature' has thus been recreated indoors in an artificial garden. The *fumoir* is no less artificially 'natural'; it merely contains different 'plant life'. Both spaces are in fact restricted in terms of the botanical variety they contain, and, simultaneously, of the society they can entertain. False, socialised exteriors have been placed into these interiors; restrictions have been placed on natural, rather than social, behaviour. Public and private, male and female worlds, cohabit separately, remote from each other. The only ambiguity here is between exterior and interior; other, even more ambiguous, spaces are required for unhindered circulation and transgression.

The most obvious such space in the Hôtel Saccard is the *serre chaude* adjoining the house. As is the case in the novel's *incipit* (and in the texts from which it appropriates), species are enumerated, but here the naturalism is explicitly biological: the plants are referred to with initial capital letters. However, there are no restrictions on the room's contents: all types of plant are here with covered and bare species coexisting. Vegetation here is not furniture; the descriptions of individual species do not render them lifeless; nature, even if artificially installed, remains natural, and, ultimately, an incitement to 'natural' activity. The *serre* is outside and inside at the same time; it is transparent, yet

remote from the surroundings which its transparency reveals. It is, according to Mario Maurin, 'a patch of nature artificially sustained, whose exotic exuberance acts on the lovers' senses like a heady philter'.⁴⁸ However, its effects on the lovers cannot be seen in isolation from those of other similarly ambiguous spaces. Its capacity to incite transgressive behaviour lies perhaps in the very artifice which sustains it, an artifice which is found throughout the novel, in a number of locations, notably, the Bois, which it resembles insofar as it contains plant life, and is laid out in 'allées', but also, more importantly, the city. Its artificiality is essentially that of urban architecture of the nineteenth century, as we learn at the outset:

Autour d[e Renée], la serre chaude, pareille à une nef d'église, et dont de minces colonnettes de fer montaient d'un jet soutenir le vitrail cintré, étalait ses végétations grasses, ses nappes de feuilles puissantes, ses fusées épanouies de verdure.

(I, 354)

For Naomi Schor, a window may be seen as 'a neuralgic point where Zola's aesthetic, sexual and political concerns intersect'.⁴⁹ The *serre*, a glass and steel structure attached to a stone building, brings to mind the railway station, the exhibition palace and the market pavilion, structures simultaneously opaque and transparent in which 'circulation' (of people and goods) can occur, and which are central features of the world Zola depicts. Consider, conversely, the description of Baltard's Halles in *Le Ventre de Paris* (itself a novel which opens with a *défilé* of vehicles):

L'ombre sommeillant dans les creux des toitures multipliait la forêt des piliers, élargissait à l'infini les nervures délicates, les galeries découpées, les persiennes transparentes; et c'était, au-dessus de la ville, jusqu'au fond des ténèbres, toute une végétation, toute une floraison, monstrueux épanouissement de métal, dont les tiges qui montaient en fusée, les branches

⁴⁸ Mario Maurin, 'Zola's Labyrinths', *Yale French Studies*, 42 (1969), 89-104 (p. 98.).

⁴⁹ Schor, 'Zola: From Window to Window', p. 47.

qui se tordaient et se nouaient, couvraient un monde avec les légèretés de feuillage d'une futaie séculaire.

(I, 621)

The 'ville' in question here is not Paris, but the Halles themselves, likened in Florent's mind to 'quelque ville étrange, avec ses quartiers distincts, ses faubourgs, ses villages, ses promenades et ses routes, ses places et ses carrefours, mises tout entière sous un hangar un jour de pluie, par quelque caprice gigantesque' (ibid.). The Halles can simultaneously appear as city or *serre*. Moreover, all manifestations can be represented in taxonomic terms.

Like the Halles, or the railway station, the *serre* is part of the urban environment and at the same time part of 'somewhere else'; indeed, the nineteenth-century elimination of distance between city and 'not-city', society and nature, public and private, extends to all structures, and the capacity for transgression, or, as it were, moral mobility, as much as physical mobility, is a function of this spatial ambiguity, which recurs in *La Curée* at every turn. The *serre* is subsequently the scene of Renée's and Maxime's transgression. However, this is not where it is initiated. Rather, the *serre* serves to prolong and sustain their excessively 'natural' behaviour; but it is in another artificial, yet less 'sustainable' environment, the *cabinet particulier* of Chapter IV, that most ambiguous combination of private and public space, that the incestuous relationship of Renée and Maxime is consummated. The *cabinet* is an essentially equivocal private space into which the public world of the boulevard never ceases to intrude. Renée, on entering from the pavement, which has bestowed on her 'un délicieux frisson de peur', has the impression of entering 'le demi-jour d'un lieu suspect et charmant'; the sights, sounds and sensations of the street, constantly in movement, are never far away:

Un roulement continu entraînait par la fenêtre grande ouverte, et sur le plafond, dans les reflets du café d'en bas, passaient les ombres rapides des promeneurs.

(I, 447-48)

Although in a closed space, Renée is able to move around by means of vision, inspecting the room with the 'binocle' first put on display in the Bois de Boulogne; like the Bois and the Hôtel Saccard, the cabinet's interior is described by way of an enumeration of items of furniture. The effects of the moral ambiguity of the settings are intensified by the furnishings; Renée 'jouissait profondément de ce mobilier équivoque'. For Maxime and the waiter, the usual purpose of the settings and their relationship to the street is quite clear: Maxime stops short of admitting that he has recently 'soulé [...] avec une dame, rencontrée sur le boulevard' (I, 449). The boulevard itself is described in terms of its 'furniture'; it too is an ambiguous space, simultaneously one of commerce and leisure both legitimate and illegitimate, where it is not clear whether it is night or day, outdoors or indoors:

En bas, sur le boulevard, Paris grondait, prolongeait la journée ardente, avant de se décider à gagner son lit. Les files d'arbres marquaient, d'une ligne confuse, les blancheurs des trottoirs et le noir vague de la chaussée, où passaient le roulement et les lanternes rapides des voitures. Aux deux bords de cette bande obscure, les kisoques des marchandes de journaux, de place en place, s'allumaient, pareils à de grandes lanternes vénitienes [...] posées régulièrement à terre, pour quelque illumination colossale. [...]. Pas un volet n'était mis, les trottoirs s'allongeaient sans une raie d'ombre, sous une pluie de rayons qui les éclairait d'une poussière d'or, de la clarté chaude et éclatante du plein jour.

(I, 449)

This is an equivocal environment in which women and men can mix freely, particularly around the tables of the 'ardent foyer' of the café Riche. The most fascinating aspect of this 'va-et-vient continu' for Renée is the *défilé* of women, presumably prostitutes, which almost literally draws her into movement on the street:

Celles qui marchaient se perdaient lentement au milieu de la foule, et la jeune femme, qu'elles intéressaient, les suivait du regard, allait d'un bout du boulevard à l'autre, dans les

lointains tumultueux et confus de l'avenue [...].

(I. 450)

After observing this 'éternelle procession de petites poupées mécaniques', and (again, through her 'binocle') the continual departures of the 'omnibus des Batignolles', Renée does not wish to 'leave' the street ('Elle rapportait de la fenêtre un peu du vacarme et de l'animation du boulevard. Elle ne voulut pas que son compagnon fermât la croisée'), and treats the noise from outside as if the interior spectacle of an orchestra providing accompaniment to dinner. When the noise outside does finally die down, it is retained by Renée in interiorised form, with imagery recalling the effects of the *défilé* in the Bois de Boulogne:

Le bruit diminuait sur le boulevard; mais elle l'entendait au contraire qui grandissait, et toutes ces roues, par instants, semblaient lui tourner dans la tête.

(I, 453)

If the boulevard is brought inside, and has the capacity to affect Renée, the interiority of the street itself is doubly intensified, firstly in the sense of being able to take on moods, and secondly in its being likened to the inside of a building:

Une ivresse, une langueur montaient des profondeurs plus vagues du boulevard. Dans ce ronflement affaibli des voitures, dans l'effacement des clartés vives, il y avait un appel caressant à la volupté et au sommeil. Les chuchotements qui couraient, les groupes arrêtés dans un coin d'ombre, faisaient du trottoir le corridor de quelque grande auberge, à l'heure où les voyageurs gagnent leur lit de rencontre.

(I, 454)

The conflation of exterior and interior constitutes almost an invitation to transgressive behaviour, and when the point of no return is passed, the boulevard, along with its effects of light and sound, is present in the room as far as Renée is concerned:

Dans le grand silence du cabinet, où le gaz semblait flamber plus haut, elle sentit le sol trembler et entendit le fracas de l'omnibus des Batignolles qui devait tourner le coin du boulevard. Et tout fut dit.

(I, 456)

The recurrent detail of the omnibus is significant, its movement is linked earlier with that of a single prostitute ('la femme à la robe bleue et aux guipures blanches, [...], toujours en quête') who attracts Renée's interest. Here public transport moves in the same circles, as it were, as street prostitution; at the beginning of the novel, Renée witnesses (through the same binocle) a *défilé* of private modes of conveyance while examining the courtesan Laure d'Aurigny. The experience of the *cabinet particulier* abolishes the distinction between public and private, as moral boundaries are discarded. Once the transgressive act has occurred, however, everything returns to normal:

Elle alla à la fenêtre, tira les rideaux, s'accouda. L'orchestre était mort; la faute s'était commise dans le dernier frisson des basses et le chant lointain des violons, vague sourdine du boulevard endormi et rêvant d'amour. En bas, la chaussée et les trottoirs s'enfonçaient, s'allongeaient, au milieu d'une solitude grise. Toutes ces roues grondantes de fiacres semblaient s'en être allées, en emportant les clartés et la foule.

(I, 457)

Again, it would seem that the intrusion of the exterior world of Paris, and particularly of the movement facilitated by its new layout, is a necessary condition for the creation of an ambiguous moral environment (mirroring the equally ambiguous physical environment) in which transgression can occur. That is to say, spatial relations, here as elsewhere, dictate social and, here in particular, sexual relations.

Later, we find Renée and Maxime in the similarly equivocal atmosphere of the *serre*, amid 'une débauche de feuilles' and overcome by 'des désirs fous de croissance immédiate', 'à mille lieues de Paris, en dehors de la vie facile du Bois et des salons officiels, dans le coin d'une forêt de l'Inde...' (I, 487-88). Blurring of natural categories

combines with an overpowering and immediate (that is, direct, transparent and unhindered) sense of fertility and potency to remove the couple from the city completely, paradoxically as a function of their being in it. Distance is conceived in terms of its absence, and exteriority in terms of interiority. The lovers are 'en dehors' precisely on account of their being in the enclosed space of the *serre*. The Bois, conversely, is perceived as an interior, of the same stamp as the salon; it performs an unambiguously social role, reproducing a version of nature acceptable to the Metropolitan gaze. In the *serre*, however, plants remain natural, and become people, not furniture, as people become as natural as the vegetation surrounding them. Plants take on human attributes, affected by the lovers as much as the lovers are affected by them:

La serre aimait, brûlait avec eux. [...] Les Palmiers, les grands Bambous de l'Inde...mêlaient leurs feuilles avec des attitudes chancelantes d'amants lassés. Plus bas, les Fougères, les Ptérides, les Alsophila, étaient comme des dames vertes, avec leurs larges jupes garnies de volants réguliers[...].

(I, 486)

Identities, whether of plants or of people, are uncertain and interchangeable, and to a large extent dependent on the environments in which they are situated. It is only in the *serre*, the express purpose of which is to create a climate where species behave according to the fullest expression of their natural imperatives, that incestuous desire, though disapproved of by the world outside, can manifest itself most fully without social hindrances. In the *serre*, therefore, having become a 'plant', her mouth opening with 'l'éclat avide et saignant de l'Hibiscus de la Chine' (another recurrent detail, first mentioned in the description of the Hôtel Saccard), so that she is no longer anything but 'une fille brûlante de la serre', Renée is answerable only to her own 'natural' urges, and is able to take control of the relationship with Maxime ('C'était surtout dans la serre que Renée était l'homme'). But because the

serre is not, as Renée might wish it to be, a hermetically sealed space, but one which is linked with Haussmann's, indeed Saccard's, Paris, an environment built on the artifice of financial speculation, her demise comes about as a result of the incompatibility of her 'natural' environment with the social one with which it is inescapably connected. She may at one point appear in command, or believe herself to be so, but once Maxime decides to abandon their relationship and opt for society rather than nature, and once her debts (incurred through old-fashioned and unspeculative 'private' borrowing from the Lheureux-like Worms) have made her lavish lifestyle untenable, she loses control, her doomed motion unchecked due to her immersion in nature. The transgressive behaviour of Renée and Maxime, then, is a function of ambiguous environments, where socially-defined boundaries and distinctions become transparent and ultimately non-existent. But this very ambiguity is dependent on the nature of the new city which is being constructed around them; it is impossible for their private life to be truly private, since their private pleasure is inseparable from the public space in which they and others move. Conversely, public space becomes private property:

Les amants avaient l'amour du nouveau Paris. Ils couraient souvent la ville en voiture, faisaient un détour, pour passer par certains boulevards qu'ils aimaient d'une tendresse personnelle.

(I, 496)

Their love appears to be a function of the new Paris. Indeed, it has come about in circumstances and environments unimaginable in any other context than that of Haussmannisation, and its continuation occurs in the *serre*, a product of the metropolitan view of nature. And as far as the lovers are concerned, there is no distinction between the interior of the Hôtel Saccard and the exterior world of the city, which has been furnished with a specific purpose particular to them in mind, which is at the same time part of the

general public purpose to rid Paris of its network of narrow medieval streets and enhance mobility:

Ils roulaient toujours, et il leur semblait que la voiture roulait sur des tapis, le long de cette chaussée droite et sans fin, qu'on avait faite uniquement pour leur éviter les ruelles noires. Chaque boulevard devenait un couloir de leur hôtel.

(I, 497)

The bourgeois interior and the urban street landscape, identified with each other, are further linked with the 'natural' environment of the garden, reinforcing the earlier 'garden' motifs:

Et quand ils rentraient, un peu étourdis par le tohu-bohu éclatant de ces longs bazars, ils se plaisaient au parc Monceau, comme à la plate-bande nécessaire de ce Paris nouveau, étalant son luxe aux premières tiédeurs du printemps.

(I, 497)

Like the Bois de Boulogne, the parc Monceau too is utterly essential to the conception of the new city; it is at once separate from Paris and part of it, a supplement, as it were. Furthermore, the new culture of consumption is clearly linked here with the natural motif of seasonal regeneration, in the same way that Renée's and Maxime's behaviour in the balmy atmosphere of the *serre* is not purely 'natural', but is indissociable from material luxury and greed; according to Nathan Kranowski, 'dans un sens, ce site naturel, artificiellement aménagé par Alphand d'après le Hyde Park de Londres, reflète l'élégance vaine de Renée'.⁵⁰ And again, it is likened in the novel both to a furnished interior and to the equally artificial urban network of thoroughfares:

Ils se plaisaient à ce coin charmant du nouveau Paris, à cette nature aimable et propre, à ces pelouses pareilles à des pans de velours, coupées de corbeilles, d'arbustes choisis, et bordées de magnifiques roses blanches. Les voitures se croisaient là, aussi nombreuses que sur un boulevard; les promeneuses y traînaient leurs jupes, mollement, comme si elles n'eussent pas quitté du pied les tapis de leurs salons. Et, à travers les feuillages, ils

⁵⁰ Nathan Kranowski, *Paris dans les romans d'Émile Zola* (Paris: PUF, 1968), p. 20.

critiquaient les toilettes, se montraient les attelages, goûtaient de véritables douceurs aux couleurs tendres de ce grand jardin.

(I, 496)

Sartorial, vehicular and botanical concerns come together as part of one spectacle. This environment, like the *serre*, the Bois, the boulevard, the bourgeois salon, the *cabinet particulier* (or even the beach: ‘ils allèrent aux bains de mer, mais à regret, pensant sur les plages de l’Océan aux trottoirs des boulevards’ (I, 497)), is in a sense interchangeable with the others since it is composed of the same elements. And what all these environments have in common is firstly, that they facilitate movement in one way or another, be it physical motion or the transgression of moral boundaries, and secondly, that they are often described in terms of enumeration: each environment is simultaneously natural and artificial, and contains a range of species, whether these be of people, plants, vehicles, items of furniture, all of which can be represented in terms of each other. Physical space and motion determine the possibilities of physical and social mobility, and moral transgression, in a highly systematised imaginative complex, the fundamental principle of which is that behaviour will occur in accordance with both ‘natural’ and ‘social’ imperatives intrinsic to a global environment composed of distinct yet interlinked units. And this brings us back to the question of epistemology, since these micro-environments are represented by texts which are linked on several levels, not only among themselves within the framework of the novel, but to the wider naturalist and indeed realist canon. At the end of *La Curée*, the reader is confronted with essentially the same traffic jam as occurs in the novel’s opening chapter, taking place in the same surroundings, and expressed by practically the same text. What seems to be stressed is that the circumstances which prevail in the *incipit* are still in place: all that has changed is Renée, who, having been placed in this environment initially, has suffered the consequences arising from overenthusiastic

immersion in it. Rather as in Yonville at the end of *Madame Bovary*, the same circumstances prevail in the Bois as at the beginning of *La Curée*, with the same individuals performing their seemingly eternal roles ('la duchesse de Sternich, dans son éternel huit-ressorts' (I, 594), and so on), apart from the doomed heroine. The irony here is of course that Renée's Paris, 'la ville complice', unlike Emma's Yonville, is defined by its being perpetually in a state of change. This eternal present is an atmosphere in which those such as the constantly self-reinventing Saccard will – up to a point – thrive, but in which Renée, a product of the old Paris as represented by the Béraud du Châtel family, and in many ways a commodity to be circulated by her husband, will be a victim. According to Brian Nelson, Renée is torn between two worlds, that of Saccard and that of her father.⁵¹ In environmental and economic terms, she has been transplanted from 'le paisible horizon de son enfance, ce coin de cité bourgeoise et ouvrière' (the source of the repayment of her debts after her death) into an environment of Haussmannian speculation, and cannot cope with the position she occupies, in Janell Watson's terms, as 'the consumer and the consumed'.⁵² She is also, as we have seen, constantly on the cusp of public and private worlds. Her private degradation parallels the public corruption of the Second Empire, a parallel reinforced at the end of the novel by the presence of the Emperor in the Bois de Boulogne. What naturalism does in *La Curée* is to show that although the same environment exists at the end of the text as at the beginning, this environment has a meaning, and ultimately an effect: it is through the novel's intratextual and intertextual resonances that texts depicting movement, taxonomy and spatial relations take on meaning.

⁵¹ Brian Nelson, *Zola and the Bourgeoisie. A Study of Themes and Techniques in the Rougon-Macquart* (London: Macmillan, 1993), pp. 66-67.

⁵² Janell Watson, 'The Gendered Political Economy of *La Curée*', *Nineteenth-Century French Studies*, 25 (1997), 119-30 (p. 128).

Zola's naturalist project works alongside other nineteenth-century strategies of representation of space, society and gender in order to link physical, social and moral movement. No doubt the passages cited above could stand alone and similar conclusions could be drawn about Zola's (or indeed anyone else's) representation of society. The traffic jam is a good example of this; it closely resembles the traffic jam in *L'Éducation sentimentale*, where the listing of vehicles has no particular biological significance: its significance lies in the very act of enumeration. It is only when Zola's *encombrement*, itself a composite of previous discourses, is contextualised in nature by way of the subsequent descriptions of the park itself and of the Hôtel Saccard that its fuller naturalist significance develops. When it is reproduced almost word for word at the end of the novel, it reinforces the naturalist status of the latter. According to Baguley, 'whereas the naturalist incipit tends to derive from the realist project, the ending is more particular to the genre'.⁵³ This is very much the case in *La Curée*: in the light of all the other taxonomic descriptions of vehicles, plants, furnishings and so on, this text has to be read differently from the way in which it is read at the start, and will contain far more meaning, primarily because its themes and motifs have been reiterated and explored in different yet necessarily related forms and contexts throughout the text. Indeed, the reiterative process serves to relate seemingly disparate contexts and environments. Similarly, nineteenth-century descriptions of interiors often employ great detail with regard to furniture, windows and so on. Again in *La Curée* it is the organic relationships between such descriptive passages which add further meaning to individual extracts. We only become aware of the full significance of the depiction of plants as furniture, for example, when we see furniture depicted as vegetation. But these organic relationships in turn extend beyond the text to other realist fiction: it is through reworking of the latter's conventions, in this context those concerned with taxonomic

⁵³ Baguley, *Naturalist Fiction*, p. 179.

enumeration, that the naturalist text emerges. Similarly, gendered spaces and the public/private dichotomy exist independently of any nature motifs, and indeed of Zola, but are given particular resonance by their induction into the naturalising scheme of things. Most importantly, however, it is the organic combination of different representations of space which ultimately informs the behaviour, movement and interaction of individuals. In *La Curée*, it is precisely because topography is so impregnated with social, historical and biological significance that it does indeed, in confirmation of Schor's reading, despatch Zola's characters to sealed fates. It is, however, to be remembered that Zola's topographical descriptions, and those of movement within them, are first and foremost imbued with significance of a textual nature, which is central to the generic significance of naturalism.

Chapter Three

Hausmannization, Circulation and the Ideal City of *Au Bonheur des*

Dames

*Un tel passage est une ville, un monde en miniature – Guide illustré de Paris (1852)*¹

Much has been said of the status of *La Curée* as Zola's definitive statement on the transformation of Paris during the Second Empire. '*La Curée*, à n'en pas douter, est le roman même de "l'haussmannisation"', writes Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson, who sees in the novel a figuring of the 'mobilité vertigineuse de tous ordres' which characterises the period.² The principal form of mobility in *La Curée*, according to Ferguson, is that of property, in that the novel's chief focus lies in the processes whereby 'l'immobilier devient mobile'.³ As we have seen, this mobility is paralleled structurally by topographical, financial, and sexual mobility, so that boundaries in all areas become blurred or are transgressed. While *La Curée* does indeed address the actual process of urban transformation, and goes into quite some detail about the political and financial machinations behind Haussmann's *grands travaux*, often making explicit reference to the involvement of Louis-Napoléon, and presenting panoramic vistas of the Paris to come in

¹ Cited in Walter Benjamin, *Paris, Capitale du XIXe siècle*, trans. by Jean Lacoste, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Paris: Cerf, 1993), p. 869.

² Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson, 'Mobilité et modernité: le Paris de *La Curée*', *Les Cahiers naturalistes*, 67 (1993), 73-81 (pp. 73-74). See also Robert Lethbridge, 'Zola et Haussmann: Une Expropriation Littéraire', pp. 85-96 and Alain Plessis, '*La Curée* et l'Haussmannisation de Paris', 97-105, in '*La Curée*' de Zola (SEDES). Lethbridge's reading of the novel, centred on Zola's journalism and notebooks during its composition, posits Aristide Saccard as a possible fictional evocation of Haussmann; Plessis questions the novel's chronology and historical accuracy.

³ Ferguson, 'Mobilité et modernité', p. 74.

contrast with the crowded medieval centre, it does not have a monopoly on mobility, or indeed on Haussmannization.

There are in fact several other, later, novels in the *Rougon-Macquart* cycle which, while not being explicitly about Haussmannization, address different aspects of the Second-Empire city at various stages of its transformation. *Une Page d'Amour*, for example, presents panoramic *tableaux* of a Paris which is fundamentally immobile, or at least where the movement of the city is divorced from the immediate narrative environment. Furthermore, there is very little movement within that city by any of the characters. The only journeys made by Hélène, the novel's female protagonist, are to the garden of her married neighbour Docteur Deberle, and to the *maison garnie* where their affair is ephemerally consummated, in the Passage des Eaux, hardly a thoroughfare of which Haussmann would have approved. Similarly, in *L'Assommoir*, Gervaise only leaves the periphery of the city on her wedding day, in a perambulation through central Paris which highlights the incongruity of her social milieu with the bourgeois surroundings of the Louvre and the Colonne Vendôme.⁴ However, towards the end of the novel, as she wanders aimlessly round the exterior boulevards, a very telling picture is painted of her alienation from the new city being created and the new types of mobility to be found in it, as she encounters prostitutes moving 'dans le va-et-vient régulier des bêtes en cage', and, crossing a railway bridge, hears 'le branle des trains, grondant et déchirant l'air du cri désespéré de leurs sifflets'.⁵ It is also very often a question of an excessively ordered system being undermined by a confusion which is a paradoxical result of the regulatory prescriptions of Second-Empire society. In *L'Assommoir*, for example, it is hinted that the relocation of the

⁴ Émile Zola, *L'Assommoir* (1877), in *Les Rougon-Macquart. Histoire naturelle et sociale d'une famille sous le Second Empire*, ed. Henri Mitterand, 5 vols (Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1960-67), II (1961), 371-796, Ch. III. This edition hereinafter referred to by volume and page number.

⁵ *L'Assommoir*, Ch. XII, esp. II, 764-71.

working class to peripheral areas, a side-effect if not an intended result of Haussmannization, will only rebound on the bourgeois inner city. The *alambic*, whose unrelenting mechanistic workings function as a metaphor for the build-up of working-class frustration and alienation, is likened to 'une source lente et entêtée, qui à la longue devait envahir la salle, se répandre sur les boulevards extérieurs, inonder le trou immense de Paris'.⁶ The façade of an artificially proletarian-free Paris is paralleled in *Pot-Bouille* by the orderly bourgeois façade of an archetypally Haussmannian *immeuble* concealing a world of deception, confusion and intrigue, and a sexual mobility practically exemplifying *The Communist Manifesto*'s assertion that the bourgeois, 'not content with having the wives and daughters of their proletarians at their disposal, not to speak of common prostitutes, take the greatest pleasure in seducing each other's wives'.⁷ *Nana* figures the moral degeneration of Second-Empire society which, despite its strict regulation of vice, cannot control the ability of 'insoumises' to cause social collapse through unhindered sexual circulation, whether this be in high-society salons, at the racetrack, or on the streets. And indeed, in *La Curée*, the surface rigidity of social relations belies the constant blurring and transgression of social and moral boundaries, often represented metaphorically by topographical boundaries, and where a streamlined capitalist system in development is necessarily founded on speculative chaos.

Perhaps the most memorable episode in *La Curée* directly concerned with the physical transformation of Paris is when Aristide Saccard, soon to be widowed, overlooking the city from the buttes Montmartre, presents to his first wife Angèle an almost lyrical blueprint of the forthcoming *travaux*, foreseeing 'Paris haché à coups de sabre, les

⁶ *L'Assommoir*, II, 412.

⁷ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, ed. by A.J.P. Taylor (London: Penguin, 1967, repr. 1985), p. 101.

veines ouvertes, nourrissant cent mille terrassiers et maçons, traversé par d'admirables voies stratégiques qui mettront les forts au cœur des vieux quartiers'.⁸ However, this organic conception of urban renewal reads like a prescription for surgery on an old body. There is an alternative perspective on Haussmannization to be found in Zola's novel of the department store and 'poème de l'activité moderne', *Au Bonheur des Dames*, which goes beyond the diachronic account of *La Curée* to present a synchronically 'anatomical' vision of the new Paris, which, furthermore, can be viewed in metaphorically technological as well as organic terms, expressing what Jacques Noiray refers to as 'la contagion fascinante du mécanique et du vivant'.⁹ The question becomes less one of Haussmannization *per se*, than one of the new and varied forms of exchange in a city which seems almost to have ceased to be a random collection of *quartiers*, each with its own independent economic and social life, and is beginning, it seems, to function as a unity to which mobility is central. *Au Bonheur des Dames* is arguably the novel which most fully describes these new forms of exchange based on 'circulation' in a city in the final stages of its transformation, not least because the development of the department store was an inevitable corollary of Haussmannization. According to Michael Miller:

When Louis Napoleon and Baron Haussmann planned the rebuilding of Paris, they may not have thought much about the Ville de Paris or the Coin de Rue, and certainly they knew nothing of Aristide Boucicaut or his recent move to the Bon Marché. Their concerns were elsewhere, with alleviating a nearly unbearable traffic situation, with providing work for potentially troublesome construction workers, and above all with making Paris the brilliant capital of Europe. But as they cut through the tortuous back alleys of the city, laying down long, wide boulevards ideal for cross-city travel – and mass public transit – they created the very conditions by which the new stores could tap the vast Parisian market.¹⁰

⁸ *La Curée* (1871), in I (1960), 317-599 (p. 389).

⁹ Zola, *Ébauche* for *Au Bonheur des Dames*, Bibliothèque Nationale, Nouvelles acquisitions françaises, 10277, cited by Mitterand, III, 1679; Jacques Noiray, *Le Romancier et La Machine: l'image de la machine dans le roman français (1850-1900)*, 2 vols (Paris: Corti, 1981), I: *L'Univers de Zola*, p. 252.

¹⁰ Michael Miller, *The Bon Marché. Bourgeois Culture and the Department Store, 1869-1920* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1981), pp. 35-36.

Central to Zola's novel is the consequent interrelatedness of the various elements which make up the Paris of the late 1860s. If, as according to Brian Nelson, '[l]e grand magasin est un modèle du nouveau capitalisme, modèle d'un système économique fondé sur le principe de la circulation, du mouvement, de l'écoulement: le renouvellement constant et de plus en plus rapide du capital sous forme de biens de consommation', then it is a model which functions in organic unison with the city of which it is a part. The functioning of the department store is inextricably linked with the functioning of the city. Mouret's success can be attributed not only to his demonstrably acute sensitivity to the new, commodity-based form of capitalism, but also to the integrated transport system which has emerged during the Second Empire. This network, 'qui facilite les voyages et la circulation rapide des marchandises à la fois à l'intérieur de la ville et entre Paris et le reste du monde', has two principal elements: 'les chemins de fer et le nouveau réseau urbain de larges boulevards en ligne droite'.¹¹

Nelson argues that Mouret, 'en mettant en place un système de circulation intérieure qui s'inspire du réseau de boulevards haussmanniens', 'parvient vraiment à faire entrer la rue dans le magasin'.¹² This is certainly true in the structural sense Nelson intends; Mouret not only introduces an internal circulatory system so that the store is 'pareil à une ville, avec ses monuments, ses places, ses rues', but also regulates movement within it to serve his commercial interests; as he remarks to Bourdoncle, "'ce va-et-vient continu de clientes les disperse un peu partout, les multiplie et leur fait perdre la tête'".¹³ However, what emerges is that the converse is also true; the store is resoundingly brought into the

¹¹ Brian Nelson, 'Désir et consommation dans *Au Bonheur des Dames*', *Les Cahiers naturalistes*, 70 (1996), 19-34 (p. 22).

¹² Nelson, 'Désir et consommation', p. 24.

¹³ *Au Bonheur des Dames* (1883), III (1964), 387-803 (p. 434, p. 615).

street, and is capable of regulating and indeed engendering movement in the city and beyond, in a reciprocal relationship of mobility with the Second Empire *Métropole*.

From the very beginning of the novel and Denise's arrival by train at the Gare St-Lazare (paralleling Mouret's arrival at the Gare de Lyon in the previous novel in the series, *Pot-Bouille*), the capacity of the department store to generate movement and to interfere and interact with the public thoroughfare makes its presence felt: '– *Au Bonheur des Dames*, lut Jean [...]. Hein? c'est gentil, c'est ça qui doit faire courir le monde!' (III, 390). The store brings the street inside itself as a function of its intrusion onto the street: 'Il y avait là, au plein air de la rue, sur le trottoir même, un éboulement de marchandises à bon marché, la tentation de la porte, les occasions qui arrêtaient les clientes au passage' (III, 390). Indeed, there is what might be termed a contagion of movement; it is interaction with traffic which directs Denise towards the shop: 'Une voiture les força tous trois à quitter le milieu de la place; et, machinalement, ils prirent la rue Neuve-Saint-Augustin, ils suivirent les vitrines, s'arrêtant de nouveau devant chaque étalage' (III, 391; when she tries to leave the shop on being dismissed later in the novel, 'toute une file de fiacres l'empêchait de quitter le trottoir du Bonheur des Dames' (III, 561)). When Denise then attempts to go on her way, she is 'reprise par une vitrine'. Indeed, this is the beginning of the process whereby she is drawn into the functioning of Mouret's machine, and becomes part of 'tout un peuple de femmes passant dans la force et la logique des engrenages' (III, 402), in an 'economy' essentially based on movement, of funds, of goods, of people, of vehicles, which has supplanted the static world of the old-style shop as represented by the likes of Baudu, who, with unwitting foresight, sees Mouret as 'un brouillon dangereux qui bouleversera le quartier' (III, 408), and denounces his employees as 'un tas de godelureaux qui manœuvraient comme dans une gare, qui traitaient les marchandises et les clientes comme des paquets, lâchant le patron ou lâché par lui pour un mot, sans affection, sans

mœurs, sans art!’ (III, 409). Hostility to the new form of commerce parallels hostility to the ‘artless’ new forms of transportation, as expressed by Ruskin’s comment that railway travel ‘transmutes a man from a traveller into a living parcel’.¹⁴

Similarly, the fear is expressed here not only that one form of economic activity will be superseded, but that its environment will be transformed as well. Mouret ‘bouleversera le quartier’ in literal as well as commercial terms; the expansion of his premises comes hand in hand with the *percement* of the new Rue du Dix-Décembre described in Chapter VIII of the novel.¹⁵ And if Mouret’s shop is seen by Denise as being ‘pareil à une ville’, it is one with boulevards facilitating free and easy movement; the *Vieil Elbeuf*, by contrast, is ‘noire et étroite’ like the streets of a Paris which is disappearing (III, 434). The fears of small shopkeepers about a disappearing Paris are intensified by Mouret’s implementation of advertising, not only on *pancartes*, billboards and in catalogues, but also by his exploitation of movement both to deliver and promote his wares:

Ce qui les indignait, c’était, rue de la Michodière, devant le bureau du départ, une des quatre voitures que Mouret venait de lancer dans Paris: des voitures à fond vert, rechampies de jaune et de rouge, et dont les panneaux fortement vernis prenaient au soleil des éclats d’or et de pourpre. Celle-là, avec son bariolage tout neuf, écartelée du nom de la maison sur chacune de ses faces, et surmontée en outre d’une pancarte où la mise en vente du jour était annoncé, finit par s’éloigner au trot d’un cheval superbe, lorsqu’on eut achevé de l’emplir des paquets restés de la veille; et, jusqu’au boulevard, Baudu qui blêmissait sur le seuil du *Vieil Elbeuf*, la regarda rouler, promenant à travers la ville ce nom détesté du *Bonheur des Dames*, dans un rayonnement d’astre.

(III, 470)

This scene demonstrates the centrality of movement in the new Paris to Mouret’s project to supersede the old. And once Mouret’s and Hartmann’s joint venture is completed, it is the

¹⁴ John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* [1849], in *The Works of John Ruskin. Library Edition*, 38 vols (London: Allen, 1903-12), VIII (1903), 159.

¹⁵ The rue du Dix-Décembre commemorated the date on which Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte became President of the Second Republic. In 1870 it was renamed the rue du Quatre-Septembre, after the date on which the Third Republic was proclaimed. Its presence in the novel strongly identifies the department store with the Napoleonic régime. See Nathan Kranowski, *Paris dans les romans d’Émile Zola* (Paris: PUF, 1968), p. 46.

movement of vehicles which serves as if to sound the death-knell of the *petits commerces*:

Les travaux s'achevaient, on avait débarrassé la façade des échafaudages, tout un plan du colossal édifice apparaissait, avec ses murs blancs, troués de larges vitrines claires. Justement, le long du trottoir, rendu enfin à la circulation, s'alignaient huit voitures. que des garçons chargeaient l'une après l'autre, devant le bureau du départ. Sous le soleil, dont un rayon enfilait la rue, les panneaux verts, aux rechampis jaunes et rouges, miroitaient comme des glaces, envoyaient des reflets aveuglants jusqu'au fond du *Vieil Elbeuf*. Les cochers vêtus de noir, d'une allure correcte, tenaient court les chevaux, des attelages superbes, qui secouaient leurs mors argentés. Et chaque fois qu'une voiture était pleine, il y avait, sur le pavé, un roulement sonore, dont tremblaient les petites boutiques voisines.

(III, 610)

Baudu is utterly bewildered by this quasi-funereal spectacle, unable to grasp the basics of an economy based on circulation, can only wonder 'où pouvait aller ce continuel flot de marchandises' (III, 610). The light effects conspire not only to penetrate to the darkest corners of the shop, as part of a generalised opening of the old city to air, illumination and visibility, they also open up a circulatory perspective seemingly without end. There seems to be no sense in such a system, where pure and boundless movement seems to have replaced contact between human individuals. Such continual flux has also become inscribed on the reality of the city. Christopher Prendergast writes that 'in the course of the [nineteenth] century the association of the city and speed becomes commonplace'.¹⁶

Furthermore:

Traffic and transportation [...] appear [...] as both means and metaphor for other kinds of 'circulation', notably the circulation of the commodity form and the systematic implication of the city at all levels, from public to private, in the logic and language of pure exchange. The goods train, the depot and the customs house constitute but one strand in a multiplicity of superimposed, interacting yet open-ended series of tropes, the most important of which derive from two related creations of the modern capitalist city: the department store ('Ville de Paris' was also the name of the largest department store in the city) and the advertising poster.¹⁷

The department store, then, precisely because of the movement which it generates and of

¹⁶ Christopher Prendergast, *Paris and the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), p. 189.

¹⁷ Prendergast, *Paris and the Nineteenth Century*, p. 195.

which it is a part, while being an integral element of the city, can also be considered a microcosmic working model for Paris, and for the economic system determining its transformation.

The image most commonly used in the novel to express the workings of the store itself is that of the machine. According to Jacques Noiray:

Dans *Au Bonheur des Dames* la métaphore de la machine est la métaphore privilégiée, pour ne pas dire unique du grand magasin. [...]. Alors que le terme de 'machine' n'apparaît que deux fois dans *Le Ventre de Paris* appliqué aux Halles centrales, et seulement sept fois dans *L'Assommoir*, appliqué à l'alambic, il revient une trentaine de fois dans *Au Bonheur des Dames* pour qualifier le grand magasin, sans compter les autres allusions à l'univers mécanique et industriel.¹⁸

Very early in the novel, Denise experiences 'la sensation d'une machine, fonctionnant à haute pression, et dont le branle aurait gagné jusqu'aux étalages'. What is interesting is that human beings, women in particular, are central to the machine's functioning:

La chaleur d'usine dont la maison flambait, venait surtout de la vente, de la bousculade des comptoirs, qu'on sentait derrière les murs. Il y avait là le ronflement continu de la machine à l'œuvre, un enfournement de clientes, entassées devant les rayons, étourdies sous les marchandises, puis jetées à la caisse. Et cela réglé, organisé avec une rigueur mécanique, tout un peuple de femmes passant dans la force et la logique des engrenages.

(III, 402)

Here there is a sense that the female customers are being 'processed', like the raw material in a factory machine. Later, on a particularly busy day, 'la machine surchauffée menait la danse des clientes et leur tirait l'argent de la chair' (III, 491-92). Women, as much as fabrics, are certainly represented here as being the raw material for the alchemical processes of an entity visualised by Baron Hartmann as 'cette mécanique à manger les femmes' (III, 461). The store in turn is only 'processing' them as part of 'le mécanisme du

¹⁸ Noiray, *Le Romancier et La Machine*, I, 257-58.

grand commerce moderne'(III, 460), that is, of a larger transformation taking place in Paris; if Mouret's shop is a machine, it is one which functions like the new Paris, either as whole or as part. Mouret's 'création étonnante' 'bouleversait le marché, elle transformait Paris, car elle était faite de la chair et du sang de la femme' (III, 460). This new Paris of circulation and exchange, itself constantly renewing itself, is a 'machine-monster' which must be fed constantly, on fabrics as well as flesh:

Lentement, la foule diminuait. [...]; et dans les rayons, peu à peu déserts, il ne restait que des clientes attardées, à qui leur rage de dépense faisait oublier l'heure. Du dehors, ne venaient plus que les roulements des derniers fiacres, au milieu de la voix empâtée de Paris, un ronflement d'ogre repu, digérant les toiles et les draps, les soies et les dentelles, dont on le gavait depuis le matin.

(III, 499)

The store is presented as a working part in the larger 'machine-monster' of Paris, and at the same time its aisles parallel the streets outside, so that movement within it is of the same order as movement in the city. Interconnectedness and interchangeability are thus presented simultaneously. One organ in the new Paris of commodity capitalism is depicted as functioning microcosmically in the same manner as the larger organism, and functions in this way necessarily to keep Paris running smoothly. If the store is a machine grinding customers in its cogs, other people, namely the workers, are depicted as being those cogs:

Tous n'étaient plus que des rouages, se trouvaient emportés par le branle de la machine, abdiquant leur personnalité, additionnant simplement leurs forces, dans ce total banal et puissant de phalanstère.

(III, 516)

The workers, as well as being cogs in the machine, are also citizens of a utopian city, even if at this stage it appears far from ideal. And indeed, the store is a microcosm of the larger machine of the modern city, functioning in a highly ordered manner. However, the city is

presented elsewhere as being subordinate to the store, which itself has assumed the status of an overwhelming ‘phalanstère’: during the sale of Chapter XIV, an advertising poster depicts the store as a ‘colosse’, which has grown to the point where it is ‘pareil à l’ogre des contes, dont les épaules menacent de faire craquer les nuages’. This monstrous comparison is justified by the depiction:

D’abord, au premier plan de cette gravure, la rue du Dix-Décembre, les rues de la Michodière et Monsigny, emplies de petites figures noires, s’élargissaient démesurément, comme pour donner passage à la clientèle du monde entier. Puis, c’étaient les bâtiments eux-mêmes, d’une immensité exagérée, vus à vol d’oiseau avec leurs corps de toitures qui dessinaient les galeries couvertes, leurs cours vitrées où l’on devinait les halls [...]. Au-delà. Paris s’étendait, mais un Paris rapetissé, mangé par le monstre.

(III, 763)

The shop, in fact, is as insatiable as the city. In the delivery bays, ‘le continuel flot des marchandises roulait avec la voix haute des grandes eaux; c’étaient des arrivages du monde entier, des files de camions venus de toutes les gares, un déchargement sans arrêt, un ruissellement de caisses et de ballots coulant sous terre, bu par la maison insatiable’ (III, 708). The idea of the capacity of either machine-monster to inhabit the space occupied by the other is thus reinforced. In the historical and cultural context of the period in which the novel is set, the interchangeability of constituent parts perhaps reflects what Jacques Noiray identifies in the literary metaphor of the machine as ‘la parenté qui s’établit entre les grandes machines imaginaires et la mécanique des faits historiques [...], l’idée d’un mécanisme universel, réglant à la fois les phénomènes physiques et historiques’.¹⁹

However, this apparently seamless interaction of all forms of modern activity, and indeed the idea of the late Second Empire city as a coherent unity supplanting a disorderly association of *quartiers*, each with its own commercial character and practices, are highly

¹⁹ Noiray, *Le Romancier et La Machine*, I, 253.

problematic, especially in the context of their representation by Zola's novel. If some of Zola's other novels, as suggested above, often present order concealing an underlying chaos and confusion bringing about the ultimate collapse of the 'system' or 'machine' in question, *Au Bonheur des Dames* does quite the opposite, presenting the department store and Paris as functioning like clockwork, with no sign of their becoming destabilised. Any disorder is merely superficial, and is subtended by rigorous order (as was the case with Haussmannization, through which a 'free' market was made possible only by the interventionism of an extremely authoritarian régime). Unlike in *Le Ventre de Paris*, for example, there is no 'spanner in the works', like Florent, upsetting the functioning of the machine; indeed, the novel relates Denise's gradual acceptance of 'l'évolution logique du commerce, les nécessités des temps modernes, la grandeur de ces nouvelles créations, enfin le bien-être croissant du public' (III, 590). Unlike in *La Bête humaine*, there is no psychopathic personality whose behaviour coalesces with the functioning of the machine to the extent that it becomes destabilised. And unlike in *La Curée*, there is no hint of the bubble of property speculation which made reconstruction possible actually bursting, although property-related negotiations involving the suggestively named Baron Hartmann are described at length. Any disorder, or more accurately, any independence from the new economic and urbanizing order, such as that of the small-scale retailers in the rue Neuve-Saint-Augustin, is ruthlessly suppressed by the constant development of Mouret's store, moving in tandem and in economic partnership with the *percement* of further boulevards. In short, the *Bonheur des Dames* is a perpetual motion machine, defying reality in its alchemical transformation of flesh and fabric into gold, and situated in a Paris visualised as itself being in unrelenting, unstoppable motion.

If there is very little manifestation of disorder in *Au Bonheur des Dames*, it is perhaps precisely because its action can be situated in a Paris nearing the end of

reconstruction. It might be argued that it represents a specific form of discourse particular to this historical context, described by T.J. Clark in *The Painting of Modern Life*. Although Clark's work is primarily about 'the art of Manet and his followers', it may be possible to apply some of his insights on the general notion of representation to Zola's novel and to several texts describing the unified functioning of the new Paris.

Clark argues that 'it is tempting to see a connection between the modernization of Paris put through by Napoléon III and his henchmen – in particular by his prefect of the Seine, Baron Haussmann – and the new painting of the time'.²⁰ Clark posits two conflicting points of view about modern representations of Paris. One view sees artists as propagating the 'myth of modernity', whereby the city becomes a 'space from which mere anecdote and narrative have been displaced at last, and which is therefore paintable'.²¹ That is, modern forms of representation conspire with Haussmann's creation of a bourgeois city, free from the presence of the working class and therefore not subject to any type of class-based critical analysis (whereas, in fact, as Clark points out, Paris in 1870 was still overwhelmingly working-class).²² Sense is made of something which still defies sense. The other view is that modern artists depicted Paris most often 'in terms which had nothing in common with the official myth', in avoiding those elements of the modern city which Haussmann himself would have seen as the essence of Haussmannization. Clark mediates between these views by stressing 'the effort at ideological unity involved in Haussmann's rebuilding, and on the degree to which that effort failed', arguing that special problems were involved in representing this.²³

²⁰ T.J. Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life. Paris in the Art of Manet and his Followers* (New York: Knopf, 1985), p. 23.

²¹ *ibid.*

²² Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life*, pp. 51-52.

²³ Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life*, p. 24.

It is very difficult to see *Au Bonheur des Dames* falling into the paradigm set by the latter camp; the novel simultaneously depicts and propagates a coherent vision of capitalism, of exchange, of Paris; however, it does so by adopting the language both of those opposing the new order, and of those implementing it, and inscribing them within the same discourse. Indeed, it arguably represents the success of efforts at ideological unity. Whereas Manet might ironize the difficulty of portraying the city 'in terms of a coherent image without falling into a form of bad faith', as Christopher Prendergast puts it, Zola's novel seems to convey precisely such an image.²⁴ According to the myth of modernity, says Clark:

Everyday life was being robbed in the 1860s of its established forms, [...] it had less and less of an order and substance of its own, and therefore less resistance to those forces which bound it to the market. The laws of motion within that market were clear to anyone acquainted with the *grands magasins* and the great exhibitions. Their logic was expansive and inclusive, and seemed to say that nothing much could be allowed to exist apart from capital – certainly not the motives and appearances of people in their daily, humdrum production of themselves.²⁵

Any order is displaced to the market, and the city, formerly an assortment of discrete, legible elements, becomes, in terms of 'the essential myth of modern life', a unified 'free field of signs and exhibits, a marketable mass of images, an area in which the old separations have broken down for good'.²⁶ Furthermore, it is a view which sees the process of change as completed, whereas in reality 'there was no [...] apocalypse in the 1860s: the processes in question were barely beginning'.²⁷ The fundamental paradox is that 'the image of the city as a place of confusion and mixture beyond the powers of social control and

²⁴ Christopher Prendergast, 'Blurred Identities: The Painting of Modern Life', *French Studies*, 40 (1986), 401-12 (p. 406). This is a review article on Clark's above mentioned work.

²⁵ Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life*, p. 68.

²⁶ Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life*, p. 49.

²⁷ Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life*, p. 68.

intelligible representation' (as Prendergast puts it) is viewed in terms of its being implemented by ruthless and unstoppable order.²⁸

In *Au Bonheur des Dames*, as in other areas of discourse, there are attempts to make sense of disorder in terms of systematic order, both by the novel itself, and by its characters. The way in which the department store interacts with the Haussmannian city and its transport system can be viewed in these terms, and are part of the discourse Clark identifies not only with Haussmann's nostalgic critics, but also with Haussmann's collusion in the project. Haussmann's critics, like Mouret's, claimed that Paris was no longer plural, produced in individual *quartiers*, but had become a single, separate entity, which could only be visualised, witnessed from the point of view of alienation from it. Furthermore, any resistance to it was pointless, given its all-encompassing nature. However, this was the very impression Haussmann intended to create, and was expressed in the same terms by him and by his admirers. In his *Mémoires*, Haussmann, effectively echoing his critics who claim to have seen the demise of the *vie de quartier* in their disappearing Paris, draws a distinction between 'real' Parisians, dispersed and displaced, indeed in a way 'mobilised' by his demolitions, and 'la population, étrangère à Paris, qu'y versent chaque jour les bouches béantes des Chemins de fer, dont les cent bras attractifs s'étendent et se ramifient sur toutes les parties de la France'. He effectively endorses his critics' negative view of how a unified network of transport and exchange transforms people's lives, separating those already present from each other, and allowing new arrivals only to function as automata in the new order:

Au milieu de cet Océan aux flots toujours agités et toujours renouvelés, il existe une minorité [...] de Parisiens véritables [...], mais, isolés les uns des autres, changeant avec une extrême facilité de logements et de quartiers, ayant des familles dispersées par tous les

²⁸ Prendergast, 'Blurred Identities', p. 406.

points de Paris, ils ne s'attachent guère à la mairie d'un Arrondissement déterminé, au clocher d'une paroisse particulière.²⁹

For those who flock to the capital, on the other hand, 'Paris est [as distinct from a random collection of separate markets] comme un grand marché de consommation; un immense chantier de travail; une arène d'ambitions'.³⁰ It would seem that only outsiders are able to take full advantage of the new Paris, and indeed, this is what happens in *Au Bonheur des Dames*. Furthermore, Haussmann's Paris is only a 'chantier de travail' in terms of its being the site for the creation of a communications network; 'real' industry, in the discourse of Haussmannization, has been displaced to the *banlieue*, so that, as Prendergast suggests above, industry in the city is replaced by pure exchange. The department store may be likened to a factory, and may have raw material to transform into a product, but the raw material, of which women constitute a significant part, is part of the process of exchange, and the product is capital, to be reinvested in further urbanization and circulation: in Mouret's store, 'c'était ce renouvellement incessant du capital qui faisait la force du nouveau commerce' (III, 598). Self-fulfilment, indeed self-production is only possible within the framework of exchange and circulation, which is one which functions as a complete organic unity. The idea that the space of exchange is incomplete is suppressed utterly in Haussmann's account, which however contradicts the distinction it makes between Parisians and outsiders by stressing the necessary interdependence between Paris and the provinces. That is, precisely what makes Paris unique, and therefore requiring separate consideration in administrative matters, is its representativity of and centrality to the country as a whole. Haussmann quotes himself, speaking in the *Chambre* in 1864, as stating:

²⁹ Baron Georges Eugène Haussmann, *Mémoires*, 3 Vols (Paris: Victor Havard, 1890-93), II, 201.

³⁰ Haussmann, *Mémoires*, II, 200.

Si Paris est une Grande Ville, centre d'une activité commerciale et industrielle qui lui est propre, comme aussi, de productions spéciales, de consommations prodigieuses et d'échanges incessantes, c'est surtout la Capitale d'un puissant Empire; le séjour d'un glorieux souverain, le siège de tous les Corps par lesquels s'exerce le Pouvoir Public, en France; le foyer universel des Lettres, des Sciences et des Arts.

On this basis, 'cette cité ne saurait donc avoir une administration purement municipale'.³¹

Furthermore, the capital's special status is ahistorical, eternal:

Tout vient aboutir à Paris: Grandes Routes, Chemins de Fer, Télégraphes. Tout en part: Lois, Décrets, Décisions, Ordres, Agents. Les énergiques moyens de centralisation organisés à Paris de siècle en siècle, par les divers Gouvernements, en ont fait l'âme de la France, – 'sa tête et son cœur', ainsi que l'a dit l'Empereur, dans un de ses magnifiques discours, – Paris est la Centralisation même.³²

This rather peculiar logic which, precisely in distinguishing Paris from the rest of France, renders it, as its 'soul', as 'sa tête et son cœur', emblematic of the *Métropole* as a whole, is not unique to Haussmann. Indeed, this tension between the eradication of difference, or very often distance, between Paris and the provinces, and the consideration of Paris as a separate entity, is to be found in Zola's novel also. As well as outsiders who come to live and work in the capital, there is a new, mobile provincial clientèle, attracted by the circulation of catalogues, who remain socially anonymous on arrival in the capital, distinguished only by their spending habits. One such customer is described in Chapter III of the novel:

C'était une femme de quarante-cinq ans, qui débarquait de loin en loin à Paris, du fond d'un département perdu. Là-bas, pendant des mois, elle mettait des sous de côté; puis, à peine descendue de wagon, elle tombait au *Bonheur des Dames*, elle dépensait tout. Rarement, elle demandait par lettre, car elle voulait voir, avait la joie de toucher la marchandise, faisait jusqu'à des provisions d'aiguilles, qui disait-elle, coûtaient les yeux de la tête, dans sa petite ville. Tout le magasin la connaissait, savait qu'elle se nommait Mme Boutarel et qu'elle habitait Albi, sans s'inquiéter du reste, ni de sa situation, ni de son existence.

(III, 475)

³¹ Haussmann, *Mémoires*, II, 197.

³² Haussmann, *Mémoires*, II, 202-03

No journey is described here; there is only instant arrival, and this instantaneous circulation suppresses Mme Boutarel's identity, so that she is merely a part of the process of exchange. Her existence is rendered meaningless except in its relation to the shifting of goods. Mme Boutarel's mobility is social as well as physical; it is part of a general breaking down of categories, so that one woman is indistinguishable from another. Again, the relationship of the shop with its environment is reciprocal; the provinces are brought to the shop as much as the shop is brought to the provinces. To extend Haussmann's metaphor, the department store is 'la Centralisation même'; the eradication of distance, and the pervasiveness of the shop's commercial tentacles are all the more intense for the extent to which the provincial customer's origins are remote, just as the store's difference from its immediate commercial environment ultimately renders it representative of Paris. The necessity of 'circulation' to the department store, and to Paris, seems infinitely extendable.

Another work in which Paris's status as microcosm of France, or indeed of the world, is emphasised as being precisely on account of its specific qualities is Maxime du Camp's *Paris ses organes ses fonctions et sa vie dans la seconde moitié du XIXe siècle*. Du Camp's work, the epigraph to which reads 'Paris n'est pas une ville, c'est un monde' exploits an 'organic' metaphor to provide an exhaustive account of the functioning of practically every 'system' in the city, each of which is linked with the other and is representative of the functioning of the city as a whole. Not only are the various internal 'organs' linked with each other; like Haussmann, Du Camp insists that Paris be seen as a model for France as well: 'en étudiant avec détail l'existence spéciale de Paris, on aura un aperçu très-net et presque complexe de l'existence générale de la France'.³³ The first

³³ Maxime du Camp, *Paris ses organes ses fonctions et sa vie dans la seconde moitié du XIXe siècle*, 6 vols (Paris: Hachette, 1869-75), I (1869), 28.

volume in particular of this exhaustive account of practically every aspect of life in the city is devoted to communication: there are separate chapters on the postal system, telegraphs, 'les voitures publiques' (including both *omnibus* and *fiacres*), the railways, and the Seine. Published in 1869, it presents, rather than a history, an 'anatomie' of Paris derived from statistics and research collated in 1866, occasionally modified by the special circumstances of the Exposition Universelle of the following year. The Paris of Du Camp's work is therefore roughly contemporaneous with that of *Au Bonheur des Dames*, which covers the period 1864-69.³⁴

Central to Du Camp's account is constant movement in a smoothly functioning modern city; Paris is inhabited by 'un peuple infatigable, nerveux, vivant avec une égale activité sous la lumière du soleil, sous la clarté du gaz, haletant pour ses plaisirs, pour ses affaires, et doué du mouvement perpétuel'.³⁵ The interconnectedness of the various working parts of this perpetual-motion machine is taken for granted. Du Camp states his ambition as being to 'apprendre au Parisien comment il vit et en vertu de quelles lois physiques fonctionnent les organes administratifs dont il se sert à toute minute, sans avoir jamais pensé à étudier les différents rouages d'un si vaste mécanisme'.³⁶ That is, the average Parisian might find the new city a confusing mass of images, but Du Camp sets out to make sense of it by applying an interpretative order which is simultaneously mechanical and organic, in a conception based, just as much as Zola's work is, on the notion of the 'machine-monster'.

Du Camp freely admits that he is presenting an overwhelmingly positive view of the new city, focusing his attention on how well the various parts function, rather than on

³⁴ III, 1676, 1691, 1725. Mitterand comments (III, 1725): 'Zola a estompé tout anachronisme en supprimant tout millésime dans le texte du roman'.

³⁵ Du Camp, *Paris*, I, 3.

³⁶ Du Camp, *Paris*, I, 4.

any underlying, or indeed extraneous, political issues. The consideration of Paris as a mechanistic unity which functions like clockwork allows any inconvenient ideological concerns to be sidelined. 'Je ne puis dire avec quelle régularité se meuvent tous les engrenages qui règlent, modèrent et facilitent l'action du grand mécanisme parisien'. The impression, in general, is one of total approval for Haussmannization; indeed, the language used is not unlike Haussmann's, and implies that the process is complete: 'la transformation de Paris était devenue indispensable; cette mesure devait nécessairement concorder avec l'établissement des chemins de fer qui versent chaque jour dans les gares urbaines des milliers de voyageurs'.³⁷

If the urban network of boulevards is dependent on the railways, then every communication system which Du Camp describes in the first volume is dependent on all the others. Furthermore, each is described exhaustively in the same terms, which in fact are quite similar to the terms used to describe each part of the mechanism of Zola's department store. For example, the Parisian postal system is presented thus:

On a comparé le cœur à une pompe aspirante et foulante; on peut dire la même chose de l'hôtel central des postes: il attire sans cesse à lui les correspondances et les refoule pour les distribuer dans toutes les directions. Paris est moralement le centre de la France; c'est de là que la vie s'élance, c'est là qu'elle revient. C'est plus qu'une capitale, c'est un monde, et bien des États n'ont point un mouvement postal semblable à celui de cette seule ville.³⁸

Du Camp is obviously concerned with how the postal system fits into the transport system: 'les rapports journaliers de l'hôtel des postes avec les gares peuvent se résumer par deux cents voyages de fourgons, aller et retour'. Speed and accuracy are stressed: 'les employés,

³⁷ Du Camp, *Paris*, I, 20. Like Haussmann, Du Camp uses the verb 'verser' to describe the arrival of people by train in the capital.

³⁸ Du Camp, *Paris*, I, 81.

rapides, silencieux, portant des liasses de lettres, charriant des mannes regorgeant de papiers, vont et viennent sans se heurter dans les corridors resserrés'.³⁹

This is akin to the frantic yet similarly effective sorting which takes place in Mouret's shop prior to the dispatch of goods to the outside world; instead of the organic paradigm, however, a mechanistic one is employed:

D'interminables corridors s'étendaient, éclairés au gaz; à droite et à gauche, les réserves, fermées par des claies, mettaient comme des boutiques souterraines, tout un quartier commerçant, des merceries, des lingeeries, des ganteries, des bimbeloteries, dormant dans l'ombre.[...]. [Mouret] trouvait, au départ, les tables de triage encombrées déjà des charges de paquets, de cartons et de boîtes, que des paniers descendaient continuellement; et Campion, le chef du service, le renseignait sur la besogne courante, tandis que les vingt hommes placés sous ses ordres distribuaient les paquets dans les compartiments, qui portaient chacun le nom d'un quartier de Paris, et d'où les garçons les montaient ensuite aux voitures, rangées le long du trottoir. C'étaient des appels, des noms de rue jetés, des recommandations criées, tout un vacarme, toute une agitation de paquebot, sur le point de lever l'ancre.

(III, 709-10)

And if for Du Camp, Paris's postal system alone can be compared with that of an entire country, so can Mouret's sorting office be likened to 'tout un quartier commerçant'. It is constantly exceeding the parameters initially set for it, so that 'les commandes de l'Europe entière affluaient, il fallait une voiture des Postes spéciale pour apporter la correspondance', and that 'aujourd'hui, son personnel aurait peuplé une petite ville' (III, 710).

The functioning of the store, and the novel's description of it, might equally be likened to the capital's taxi system in Du Camp's account. Du Camp describes in excessive detail the commercial basis of the Compagnie Générale (a monopoly created in 1855 by Haussmann from independent taxi companies), explaining how the system is regulated and enumerating the various types of vehicle in service, as well as their drivers. Of particular interest is the description of the taxi depots, already by 1866 vast and complex structures,

³⁹ Du Camp, *Paris*, I, 91.

which contained their own vehicle works, where taxis were washed, repaired and even manufactured, and their horses groomed, shod and fed before being returned to the street.⁴⁰

Zola's novel describes the stables of the *Bonheur des Dames* in similar detail, stressing, in conjunction with the expansion of the store, their increasing size, complexity and capacity to despatch vehicles into the city and to the *banlieue* and beyond, carrying advertisements as well as goods:

Et, dans les écuries, des écuries royales, installées rue Mondigny, en face des magasins, se trouvaient cent quarante-cinq chevaux, tout un luxe d'attelage déjà célèbre. Les quatre premières voitures qui remuaient le commerce du quartier, autrefois, lorsque la maison n'occupait encore que l'angle de la place Gaillon, étaient montées peu à peu au chiffre de soixante-deux: petites voitures à bras, voitures à un cheval, lourds chariots à deux chevaux. Continuellement, elles sillonnaient Paris, promenant l'enseigne d'or et de pourpre du *Bonheur des Dames*. Même elles sortaient des fortifications, couraient la banlieue; on les rencontrait dans les chemins creux de Bicêtre, le long des berges de la Marne, jusque sous les ombrages de la forêt de Saint-Germain; parfois, du fond d'une avenue ensoleillée, en plein désert, en plein silence, on en voyait une surgir, passer au trot de ses bêtes superbes, en jetant à la paix mystérieuse de la grande nature la réclame violente de ses panneaux vernis. Il rêvait de les lancer plus loin, dans les départements voisins, il aurait voulu les entendre rouler sur toutes les routes de France, d'une frontière à l'autre.

(III, 710-11)

Similarly, just as the store has its own internal mechanisms and personnel for dealing with theft, described at length with the detection and apprehension of Mme de Boves, 'la Compagnie générale', according to Du Camp, 'a une police secrète parfaitement installée, fonctionnant régulièrement et qui forme une véritable administration'.⁴¹

One of the most interesting and suggestive parallels Du Camp puts forward, perhaps unwittingly, is between the railway station and the department store, not because of the obvious similarities between these enormous structures similar in architectural terms, but because of the apparent interchangeability between any of these and any other similar 'organ' of the city. Du Camp waxes lyrical about the Gare St-Lazare, 'la gare-mère',

⁴⁰ Du Camp, *Paris*, I, 225.

⁴¹ Du Camp, *Paris*, I, 241.

relieved that a potential replacement, to be situated at the Madeleine, but later scrapped, was not built. 'L'ouverture du chemin de fer amena dans le quartier une si grande affluence de voitures qu'on abandonna définitivement ce projet. [...] Quoique qualifiée de "monumentale", la façade de cette gare, qui, heureusement, n'a jamais été construite, est de dimension singulièrement restreinte; elle ne suffirait même pas à loger un des magasins qui s'étaient maintenant aux angles de certains carrefours'.⁴² Du Camp seems here to have accepted as banal norm an interchangeability of various buildings which was scorned earlier in the century by a figure Haussmann's critics looked to for prophetic inspiration. In the chapter of *Notre-Dame de Paris* (1831) entitled 'Paris à vol d'oiseau', Victor Hugo, discussing the Paris to come, remarks:

S'il est de règle que l'architecture d'un édifice soit adaptée à sa destination de telle façon que cette destination se dénonce d'elle-même au seul aspect de l'édifice, on ne saurait trop s'émerveiller d'un monument qui peut être indifféremment un palais de roi, une chambre des communes, un hôtel de ville, un collège, un manège, une académie, un entrepôt, un tribunal, un musée, une caserne, un sépulcre, un temple, un théâtre.⁴³

This imagery is strongly evoked by Zola's novel. On the architectural level, the department store can, in the terms suggested by Hugo, represent any other urban edifice. Mouret's architect, based on the real-life architect Frantz Jourdain, is very much an architect of the Second Empire, basing his renovation of the store on iron structures and open spaces in which circulation can take place:

L'architecte, par hasard intelligent, un jeune homme amoureux des temps nouveaux, ne s'était servi de la pierre que pour les sous-sols et les piles d'angle, puis avait monté toute l'ossature en fer, des colonnes supportant des poutres et des solives. [...] Partout on avait gagné de l'espace, l'air et la lumière entraient librement, le public circulait à l'aise, sous le jet hardi des fermes à longue portée. C'était la cathédrale du commerce moderne, solide et légère, faite pour un peuple de clientes. [...]. Un monde poussait là, dans la vie sonore des hautes nefs métalliques.

(III, 611-12)⁴⁴

⁴² Du Camp, *Paris*, I, 303.

⁴³ Victor Hugo, *Notre-Dame de Paris*, ed. by Jacques Seebacher (Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1975), p. 135.

⁴⁴ For Zola's use of Frantz Jourdain as a model for Mouret's architect, see III, 1726, n.1.

The store, based on the same architectural principles as the railway station and the exhibition palace, is yet metaphorized as the cathedral of a system which has replaced religion as the opiate of the consuming masses, and in which visibility and movement are prime concerns. It is indeed, to anticipate Guy Debord, a society of 'spectacle', to the extent that outside the new *Bonheur des Dames*, 'on avait dû établir une queue, ainsi qu'aux portes des théâtres'.⁴⁵ And indeed, the new structure is interchangeable, as for Du Camp, with the railway station, the apotheosis of mobility. Movement and exchange, whether it be of goods, people, signs, indeed of languages, dominate Henriette's vision of the reorganized store:

C'était comme une nef de gare, entourée par les rampes des deux étages, coupée d'escaliers suspendus, traversée de ponts volants. Les escaliers de fer, à double révolution, développaient des courbes hardies, multipliaient les paliers; les ponts de fer, jetés sur le vide, filaient droit, très haut; et tout ce fer mettait là, sous la lumière blanche des vitrages, une architecture légère, une dentelle compliquée où passait le jour, la réalisation moderne d'un palais du rêve, d'une Babel entassant des étages, élargissant des salles, ouvrant des échappées sur d'autres étages et d'autres salles à l'infini. Du reste, le fer régnait partout, le jeune architecte avait eu l'honnêteté et le courage de ne pas le déguiser sous une couche de badigeon, imitant la pierre ou le bois.

(III, 626)

The store, then, can variously represent any number of 'monuments' or 'edifices' of an emerging capitalist society.⁴⁶ Wherever it does so, however, the apparent confusion presented by the shop's status as 'free-floating signifier' conceals a governing order. In other Zola novels, a highly ordered system is undermined by atavism, economic Darwinism, thermodynamic chaos and so on, but here, the survival of the fittest is dependent precisely upon the highly ordered nature of the system, just, for example, as the allegedly free market prevalent in Second-Empire Paris is dependent on Haussmann's

⁴⁵ I allude here to Guy Debord, *La Société du spectacle* (Paris: Gallimard, 1967).

⁴⁶ It is interesting in this context to note that the first Parisian department store, the Bon Marché, originated in a plan to build a grand hotel for the exhibition of 1855. See Miller, *The Bon Marché*, pp. 27-28.

interventionism and the authoritarian state which sanctions it. *Au Bonheur des Dames* is in many respects a disorderly house ('il n'y a pas d'ordre dans cette maison'. according to Mme Marty (III, 637)) founded on order. After close of business on the day described in Chapter IV, the chaos of the shop is likened first to that of a battlefield. The city, the machine, and the battlefield, scene of the end result of 'l'activité moderne' as presented in the *Rougon-Macquart* cycle, are captured in one sentence: 'A l'intérieur, sous le flamboiement des becs de gaz, qui, brûlant dans le crépuscule, avaient éclairé les secousses suprêmes de la vente, c'était comme un champ de bataille encore chaud du massacre des tissus' (III, 499-500). Fabric becomes the sacrificial victim, in what seems to be as much a (regulated) brothel as a battlefield or city:

Les fourrures jonchaient les parquets, les confections s'amoncelaient comme des capotes de soldats mis hors de combat, les dentelles et la lingerie, dépliées, froissées, jetées au hasard, faisaient songer à un peuple de femmes qui se serait déshabillé là, dans le désordre d'un coup de désir; tandis que, en bas, au fond de la maison, le service du départ, en pleine activité, dégorgeait toujours les paquets dont il éclatait et qu'emportaient les voitures, dernier branle de la machine surchauffée.

(III, 500)

The visible confusion above is maintained by the ruthless mechanical system below, and the basest human instincts are harnessed, taken advantage of, by a machine which is capable of creating order out of chaos. The women who walk the 'streets' of Mouret's store do not do so independently; Mouret takes every 'regulationist' step necessary to order their movement. The machine is one, furthermore, which is non-specific, and can be described in terms of several different types of machine. It might be the steamboat about to depart, as mentioned above, or indeed the 'grand navire filant à pleine machine' evoked towards the end of the novel (III, 775). Furthermore, even though these machines might be 'surchauffées', they do not run down; their functioning might be described as being 'anti-entropic'. It is the *petits commerces* which are subject to entropy; or perhaps, rather, any

entropic forces present in the functioning of the shop are displaced to the small shops, whose run-down of energy levels is manifested in the flocking of their customers to their much more efficient competitor: 'C'était la mort lente, sans secousse, un ralentissement continu des affaires, des clientes perdues une à une' (III, 599). The *Bonheur des Dames*, however, remains in a state of perpetual motion, without the slightest hint that the integument might burst asunder. Even when the commercial activity of the shop has shut down and the gas lights have been turned off, the machine manages to take on yet another industrial identity, in language highly reminiscent of *Germinal*. On Denise's return from a day trip to Joinville (by train and *fiacre*), she continues to travel, in a landscape not of exchange but of the production which makes it possible:

Elle préféra ce voyage, malgré les ténèbres qui noyaient les galeries. Pas un bec de gaz ne brûlait, il n'y avait que des lampes à huile, accrochées de loin en loin aux branches des lustres; et ces clartés éparses, pareilles à des taches jaunes, et dont la nuit mangeait les rayons, ressemblaient aux lanternes pendues dans les mines. De grandes ombres flottaient, on distinguait mal les amoncellements de marchandises, qui prenaient des profils effrayants, colonnes écroulées, bêtes accroupies, voleurs à l'affût. Le silence lourd, coupé de respirations lointaines, élargissait encore ces ténèbres.

(III, 532)

And indeed, it is perhaps this tension between exchange and production which is represented by the tension between disorder and order. The workers in the store are in an ambiguous position, in that they are involved daily in the process of commercial exchange, yet their conditions are not unlike those of factory labourers (or indeed soldiers, in that they are accommodated in 'barracks', the more literal type of which appeared throughout Haussmann's network of urban thoroughfares). Their status as 'rouages' is equally ambiguous: they are cogs in an industrial machine, but at the same time they are links in a commercial chain, a mechanism where each constituent part is relayed to every other. It is because Denise realizes the importance of production, and in fact is at first sceptical of the conception of the new economic order, that she manages to succeed in resolving the

dichotomy between the relentless order of production and the apparent disorder of exchange. When she comes to plead the cause of the workers in her conversations with Mouret, she does not do so from a naïve Proudhonian or a materialist Marxist perspective, but one which sees the interests of capital and labour as being reconcilable if appropriate compromises are made. If Mouret accuses her of socialism, the only variant which there are any real grounds to accuse her of espousing is the utopianism of Fourier:

Elle plaidait la cause des rouages de la machine, non par des raisons sentimentales, mais par des arguments tirés de l'intérêt même des patrons. Quand on veut une machine solide, on emploie du bon fer; si le fer casse ou si on le casse, il y a un arrêt du travail, des frais répétés de mise en train, toute une déperdition de force. Parfois, elle s'animait, elle voyait l'immense bazar idéal, le phalanstère du négoce, où chacun aurait sa part exacte des bénéfices, selon ses mérites, avec la certitude du lendemain, assurée à l'aide d'un contrat.

(III, 728)

What the novel in fact depicts is the emergence of the department store as utopian ideal city, which is extendable to the real city. The novel ends with this having been achieved, in terms both of exchange and production, so that not only is the store's customer base spread throughout the metropolis, but so too has the colossal phalanstère, its mechanically monstrous workings vindicated, occupied the urban space. As Mouret surveys his preserve:

Il y avait comme un élargissement continu, un rayonnement de la clientèle, remportée aux quatre points de la cité, vidant les magasins avec la clameur ronflante d'une écluse. Cependant, les voitures du Bonheur, les grandes lettres d'or des enseignes, les bannières hissées en plein ciel, flambaient toujours au reflet de l'incendie du couchant, si colossales dans cet éclairage oblique, qu'elles évoquaient le monstre des réclames, le phalanstère dont les ailes, multipliées sans cesse, dévoraient les quartiers, jusqu'aux bois lointains de la banlieue.

(III, 799)⁴⁷

⁴⁷ This depiction (and that found earlier in the poster) of the capacity of the department store to extend beyond its boundaries bears comparison with a contemporary advertisement for the Chaussée d'Antin in *Le Tintamarre*: 'Tous les chemins de fer français réunis ne font pas en tout 10 000 kilomètres, donc dix millions de mètres. Ce seul magasin pourrait donc avec ses étoffes dresser une sorte de tente sur toutes les voies ferrées de France, *ce qui serait très agréable l'été, pendant les chaleurs*'. Benjamin, *Paris, Capitale du XIXe siècle*, p. 194 (emphasis in original).

The store's triumphal success, and its status as ideal city as much as 'bazar idéal', are rooted in its efficient and relentless workings, and in its capacity to exploit, mirror and ultimately to determine the means of circulation in the Paris of Haussmann, as well as to play the role of any other of the 'organes' which constitute it. Circulation is as much about the store's 'circulability' as signifier, its interchangeability with other modern institutions and systems, as about the circulatory economy of which it is a part.

In conclusion, we might remark that the most interesting Second-Empire institution with which the department store can be interchanged, precisely because, on the level of discourse, the novel itself can be considered in its terms, is the Exhibition. The chapter of *Au Bonheur des Dames* in which the new architecture is unveiled is that of 'la grande exposition des nouveautés d'été'. The shop's layout, in different *pavillons*, as it were, is akin to that of the Exhibition palace, and chronologically, although Zola, according to Mitterand, 'a supprimé tout millésime' in order to avoid potential anachronisms, we learn from the *dossier préparatoire* that this episode takes place in 1867, when, in the words of Walter Benjamin, 'la fantasmagorie de la culture capitaliste trouva son plus grand épanouissement lors de l'Exposition universelle'.⁴⁸

The novel itself is perhaps, along with Du Camp's *Paris*, a rather upmarket version of a type of work described by Philippe Hamon in the chapter of *Expositions* entitled 'Le Livre comme Exposition': 'Ces ouvrages [...] obéissent [...] fonctionnellement et structurellement aux mêmes présupposés (faire des bilans, décliner des listes de lieux, de types, ou d'objets, parcourir méthodiquement un champ de savoir, classer, juxtaposer des scènes, rendre lisible, donner à voir, récréer et instruire...) que les Expositions elle-

⁴⁸ B.N., N.a.f., 10277, f^{os} 30-32; Benjamin, *Paris, Capitale du XIXe siècle*, p. 907.

mêmes'.⁴⁹ Furthermore, 'l'Exposition textuelle [...] fait appel [...] à une compétence sémiotique essentiellement paradigmatique: classer, hiérarchiser, actualiser des lexiques, mettre en ordre, mettre en équivalence, imposer une clôture'.⁵⁰ It is arguable that fundamentally the same type of research went into the respective works of Du Camp and Zola, in these 'expository' terms. Zola's documentary notes on the Bon Marché and the Louvre department stores are as exhaustive and systematic as Du Camp's *Paris*, dealing in turn with every aspect of the 'machines'' functioning.⁵¹ Hamon hints in passing that Zola's novel may fit this type; in fact it does so *par excellence* in that the department store comes to represent, and in turn to be represented by, the elements, human, commercial, technological and imaginary, that constitute the 'magazinized' modern city, including the city itself. *Au Bonheur des Dames* is distinguished from other Zola novels by its unqualified optimism; for Hamon, it is 'le seul roman à happy-end' in a cycle of twenty novels, one for each *arrondissement*. The resolution of labour problems is enacted by good will, not by conflict.⁵² This is no accident in terms of its representing a fundamental closure, which is bound up with how T.J. Clark sees the representation of modernity. The mechanistic anatomy subscribed to, in which the department store, the system of boulevards and the traffic which flows upon them constitute a clockwork unity, denies the 'incompleteness, opposition, and simple refusal to move' which Clark holds to characterise the history of Haussmannization.⁵³ Any refusal to move in *Au Bonheur des Dames* is in vain; the machine's triumph is certain. The novel, as 'poème de l'activité moderne',

⁴⁹ Philippe Hamon, 'Le Livre comme Exposition', in *Expositions. Littérature et Architecture au XIXe siècle* (Paris: Corti, 1989), pp. 95-122 (p. 96).

⁵⁰ Hamon, *Expositions*, p. 104.

⁵¹ See Émile Zola, *Carnets d'enquêtes. Une ethnographie inédite de la France*, ed. Henri Mitterand (Paris: Plon, 1986), Chapter 4, 'Calicots', pp. 145-233.

⁵² As Clark points out, the reality of industrial relations in the department store bears more relation to *Germinal*: 1869 saw strikes in all the major department stores, which were broken, with less favourable terms imposed on the workers than they had before. See *The Painting of Modern Life*, p. 56.

⁵³ Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life*, p. 68.

intended to 'aller avec le siècle, qui est un siècle d'action et de conquête', perhaps conspires in what Richard Terdiman terms 'the desire to conceive the modern as transcending all temporality, all anteriority, as instituting an absolute present', even if, in this case, the processes of which the store is a part are really only beginning.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Richard Terdiman, *Present Past. Modernity and the Memory Crisis* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 132.

Chapter Four

Convulsions, Détraquement and the Circulus: Zola's Dehystericisation of Prostitution

HYSTÉRIE. – La confondre avec la nymphomanie. – Flaubert, Dictionnaire des idées reçues.

I. Convulsions Political and 'Hysterical'

If Maxime du Camp's *Paris* presents a vision of Paris, and by extension of Second Empire society, which is that of a smoothly functioning machine, then *Les Convulsions de Paris*, his four-volume denunciation of the Commune, is perhaps that vision's dysfunctional counterpart, as well as being a paradoxical 'supplement' to the earlier work's supposed completeness. *Paris*, writes Du Camp, 'm'a permis de raconter la vie de Paris, de Paris normal. Il m'a paru intéressant, pour compléter ce travail, d'en donner la contre-partie, et de dire ce que devient Paris lorsqu'il est en convulsion, lorsque souffle le vent de la folie révolutionnaire, lorsque les rouages de la vaste machine sont paralysés ou faussés par la révolte'.¹ The idea of convulsive movement is a very suggestive one, particularly when one considers that its site need not only be the city, but also the human, specifically the female body, and that there may be an ideological or psychosexual link between the respective 'convulsions' suffered by each. Neil Hertz, in a psychoanalytical reading of two complementary examples from *Les Convulsions*, highlights how a link is established between two entirely different types of convulsion, and how a political threat can thus

¹ Maxime du Camp, *Les Convulsions de Paris*, 2nd edn, 4 vols (Paris: Hachette, 1878-80). I (1878), p. I.

come to be perceived and represented as a sexual one.² Du Camp, denouncing Gustave Courbet for his alleged role in the destruction of the colonne Vendôme, castigates the presumed attitude behind the explosive removal of such an impressive erection as ‘ce fétichisme à l’envers’.³ Such an attitude is linked with Courbet’s ‘realism’, ‘c’est-à-dire à la représentation exacte des choses de la nature, sans discernement, sans sélection, telles qu’elles s’offrent aux regards’, an art based on ‘la théorie des impuissants; on érige ses défauts en système; si les écumeurs régnaient, elles infligeraient la petite vérole à tout le monde.’⁴

Themselves impotent and emasculated, people like Courbet wish to emasculate other structures, and by extension society, and erect abstract theory in their place. Courbet, by skimming the dregs as a human ‘ladle’, further threatens to poison society as well as art. And the Commune which he supports is linked with ‘realism’; ‘Comme une prostituée sans vergogne, elle a tout fait voir, et l’on a été surpris de la quantité d’ulcères qui la rongeaient’.⁵ This ‘realism’ reaches its apotheosis in *L’Origine du monde*, which, like the ‘prostitute’ of the Commune, reveals all, and, as far as Du Camp is concerned, is characterised by convulsion:

[O]n voyait un petit tableau caché sous un voile vert. Lorsque l’on écartait le voile, on demeurait stupéfait d’aper[ce]voir [sic] une femme de grandeur naturelle, vue de face, extraordinairement émue et convulsée, remarquablement peinte, reproduite *con amore*, ainsi que disent les Italiens, et donnant le dernier mot du réalisme. Mais, par un inconcevable oubli, l’artisan, qui avait copié son modèle sur nature, avait négligé de représenter les pieds, les jambes, les cuisses, le ventre, les hanches, la poitrine, les mains, les bras, les épaules, le cou et la tête.⁶

² Neil Hertz, *The End of the Line. Essays on Psychoanalysis and the Sublime* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), Chapter 9.

³ Du Camp, *Les Convulsions de Paris*, II (1879), 209.

⁴ Du Camp, *Les Convulsions de Paris*, II, 255-56, emphasis in original.

⁵ Du Camp, *Les Convulsions de Paris*, I, p. III.

⁶ Du Camp, *Les Convulsions de Paris*, II, 263-64. See also Gustave Courbet, *L’Origine du monde*, in Robert Fernier, *La Vie et l’œuvre de Gustave Courbet*, 2 vols (Lausanne: Bibliothèque des Arts, 1979), II.

Hertz suggests that '[t]o describe her body as 'convulsed' [...] is to assimilate her horrid appeal to that of the political "convulsions" du Camp is charting in Paris'.⁷ However, Du Camp's highly inaccurate description of the painting seems to suggest that the convulsions of which he writes are intimately linked not only with political convulsions, prostitution and the spread of disease, but also with the organ excluded from his list of regrettably absent body parts. In the apparent absence of everything else, the convulsions which horrify Du Camp seem to be linked fundamentally to the female sex organ, the exterior, visible and unwelcome manifestation of a female sexuality which can only remain unsatisfied in a society of impotent men. In other words, if the political threat is represented as a sexual one, fear of the latter is expressed in terms which are, in a number of senses enjoying wide currency in the nineteenth century, 'hysterical'. The theme of the present chapter is the widespread tendency in late nineteenth-century culture to apply to female sexuality whichever of the many available definitions of 'hysteria' happen to be convenient, in turn facilitating exploitation of the 'hysterical female', or female sexuality writ large, as metaphor for the ills of society. Central to this tendency, it will be argued, is the association of 'hysteria' with movement. Furthermore, there is a widespread awareness demonstrated by naturalist fiction of the potential of 'hysterical' mobility in its representation of what appear to be the excesses of female sexuality and their consequences, either personal or, ultimately, political. However, whereas the works of many authors (including Zola's) deal in these terms of reference, exploiting the link between movement, a pathological interpretation of female sexuality, and the wider threat it might present, there are grounds for suggesting that Zola's work in particular, while taking them to their extremes, manages to undermine them. That is to say, *Nana* manages to represent and exploit this highly suggestive link with great intensity, and yet without

⁷ Hertz, *The End of the Line*, p. 172.

endorsing it, indeed while doing quite the opposite. One of the ways in which *Nana* 'dehystericises' female sexuality is by exploiting the symbolic potential of movement, and placing it within the (greatly expanded) context of another scientific theory, or rather set of theories, that of the *circulus*, the very power of which lies in its capacity to express anything from the interdependence of every facet of society, as of any system or body, to the contagion of illnesses or attitudes. First of all, however, some words are necessary on the nineteenth-century 'hystericisation' and concomitant 'mobilisation' of women.

II. Hysteria and 'Mobility'

The connection drawn upon by Du Camp between female sexuality and convulsive movement is not unique, and indeed, is related to a long tradition usually regarded as having its origins in Plato's *Timaeus*, and which became subject to a number of socially resonant modifications during the nineteenth century. Towards the end of *Timaeus* is found the following statement on the behaviour of the reproductive organs:

[I]n men the organ of generation becoming rebellious and masterful, like an animal disobedient to reason, and maddened with the sting of lust, seeks to gain absolute sway; and the same is the case with the so-called womb or matrix of women; the animal within them is desirous of procreating children, and when remaining unfruitful long beyond its proper time, gets discontented and angry, and wandering in every direction through the body, closes up the passages of the breath, and, by obstructing respiration, drives them to extremity, causing all varieties of disease.⁸

Although the female organ in question here is not the genitals, but rather the womb, the nineteenth-century understanding of hysteria, ironically because of a generalised medical drift away from the literal interpretation of Plato's view (culminating in Charcot's

⁸ Plato, *Timaeus*, trans. by Benjamin Jowett, intr. by Glenn R. Morrow (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1949), para. 94, p. 74.

exhortation 'Rompons avec l'étymologie!'), allowed for great flexibility both in the anatomical localisation of the 'matrice', and in its wider social interpretation, to the extent that the latter could be read either as specifically as the female genitals, or as broadly as the female reproductive system, nervous system or physiological constitution. According to Michel Foucault, the nineteenth century was witness to 'l'hystérisation du corps de la femme', during which the 'sexe' was defined 'comme ce qui consitue à lui seul le corps de la femme, l'ordonnant tout entier aux fonctions de reproduction et le perturbant sans cesse par les effets de cette même fonction; l'hystérie est interprétée, dans cette stratégie, comme le jeu du sexe en tant qu'il est l'"un" et l'"autre", tout et partie, principe et manque'.⁹ The characteristics traditionally attached to the womb became attachable to any aspect of female sexuality, and indeed, as Michèle Ouerd suggests, to anything or anyone regarded as presenting a threat to the moral and civil order: 'la classe ouvrière est imaginée dans le grand corps social de la République fin de siècle comme l'utérus migrateur de l'hystérique traditionnelle'.¹⁰ The move away from the consideration of the uterus alone as the 'hysterical' organ also intensified the perceived capacity of the 'matrice' to impact on the entire organism. According to C.-L. Varlet, writing in 1824, the whole female body is subject to the operation of the procreative apparatus, vaguely designated 'la matrice', which 'jouit d'un instinct particulier: à l'époque de la puberté, cet organe s'éveille, s'accroît, exerce une espèce de domination sur tous les systèmes de l'économie; alors il se gonfle, rougit, s'échauffe, se vivifie et devient un centre d'où partent les irradiations qui influent sur tous les autres organes'.¹¹ Gérard Wajeman suggests that this example goes beyond

⁹ Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la sexualité. 1. La volonté de savoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), p. 137, pp. 201-02.

¹⁰ Michèle Ouerd, introduction to Charcot, *Leçons sur l'hystérie virile* (Paris: Le Sycomore, 1984), quoted in Janet Beizer, *Ventriloquized Bodies. Narratives of Hysteria in Nineteenth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), p. 49.

¹¹ C.-L. Varlet, *Dissertation sur l'hystérie*, Strasbourg, 1824, quoted in Gérard Wajeman, 'Psyché de la femme: note sur l'hystérique au XIXe siècle', *Romantisme*, 13-14 (1976), 57-66 (p. 59).

Plato's notion of the 'wandering womb': 'il ne s'agit pas seulement d'un être animal qui "au-dedans" de la femme désire ardemment, mais d'une matrice qui fonctionne exactement comme une métaphore anatomique du désir de la femme'.¹² And there remained an insistence throughout the century, despite notable dissent on the part of doctors such as Briquet and Charcot, that the hysterical effects of such desire, often unsatisfied, emanated from the genitals. Although hysteria may have been accepted by Hector Landouzy, in 1846, for example, as a 'névrose', its most extreme form is nymphomania, caused in those women 'chez lesquelles prédomine le système génital, sans satisfaction normale de l'instinct sexuel'.¹³ Landouzy reports that in an examination of sixty-seven 'hysterical' women, '*cinquante-cinq fois l'hystérie a coïncidé avec des altérations matérielles de l'appareil générateur, et [...] dix-huit fois elle a guéri dès la guérison de l'affection génitale*'.¹⁴ Landouzy devotes an entire chapter to the uterus as the seat of hysteria, and concludes, in terms of an apparently unproblematic interchangeability between uterus and genitals, that 'on restera convaincu que l'appareil génital est souvent la cause et toujours le siège de l'hystérie'.¹⁵ The extension, by Landouzy and others, of the uterus to include the entire female reproductive apparatus and more, allows for continence to be discarded as an explanation, so that hysteria can result from the (albeit yet unsatisfied) 'overuse' of the genitals. Even among those doctors, such as Jaccoud, who reject 'l'ancien adage gynécologique: *mulier id est quod est propter solum uterum*', and the location of hysteria in the ovaries and the uterus, the condition is still regarded as resulting 'des conditions organiques complexes, qu'entraîne la fonction génitale'.¹⁶

¹² Wajeman, 'Psyché de la femme', p. 59.

¹³ Hector Landouzy, *Traité complet de l'hystérie* (Paris: Baillière, 1846), p. 1, pp. 160-61.

¹⁴ Landouzy, *Traité complet de l'hystérie*, p. 174, emphasis in original.

¹⁵ Landouzy, *Traité complet de l'hystérie*, p. 230.

¹⁶ Jaccoud, *Nouveau Dictionnaire de médecine et de chirurgie* (Paris: Baillière, 1874), p. 184, p. 186.

However, the issue of continence remained central. Was hysteria a result, as according to the traditional uterine theory, of unsatisfied female sexuality, or of other factors such as environment, class and heredity? Central to the search for explanations for the condition was the question of its manifestation in those women considered to be least continent, prostitutes. According to Jann Matlock, '[i]f analysts could make sense of the link between prostitution and hysteria, they might arrive at answers to some of the most pressing questions about hysteria's causes'.¹⁷ What doctors did in fact arrive at as a result of their examination of prostitutes were explanations with proliferating sociological concerns attached. So, for example, in the case of Briquet, who firmly rejects both the uterine theory and the related attribution of hysteria to sexual continence, a whole range of possible causes is entertained, including age, heredity, 'constitution physique et disposition morale', climate, social position, place of education, mode of education, diet, professions, passions, previous medical history, and so on.¹⁸

One recurrent feature common to the literature on both hysteria and prostitution is movement. If continence can be rejected as an explanation for the movement of the 'migratory womb' (and even if it is not), then prostitution can be cited as a predisposing factor, particularly in terms of its status as an activity with connotations of movement on many levels: literal movement on the street, circulation via many partners and establishments, the circulation of contagious diseases, psychological 'mobility', susceptibility to 'convulsions' and so on. Alexandre Parent-Duchâtelet, pioneer of the examination and regulation of the activities of prostitutes, who in general suggests that prostitutes are less likely than other women to be hysterics, quotes, in the 1857 edition of

¹⁷ Jann Matlock, *Scenes of Seduction. Prostitution, Hysteria and Reading Difference in Nineteenth-Century France* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 126.

¹⁸ Pierre Briquet, *Traité clinique et thérapeutique de l'hystérie* (Paris: Baillière, 1859), p. 51.

De la Prostitution dans la Ville de Paris (originally published in 1836), a Dr S. Rossignol as affirming the opposite:

Rien de plus fréquent que d'observer chez ces filles [prostitutes] tous les degrés de la dyspepsie, de la gastralgie, l'anémie, la chloro-anémie, et ces mille accidents que l'on appelle aujourd'hui, avec MM. Cerise, Trousseau et autres, la *névropathie protéiforme*, ce que Whytt et Louyer-Villermay désignent sous le nom d'*hystéricisme*, c'est-à-dire une mobilité extrême, une susceptibilité outrée du système nerveux, avec une singulière aptitude à provoquer une excitation convulsive [...].¹⁹

Despite the specifically psychological sense of the term 'mobilité' used here, other readings of 'mobility' were never far away. The type of 'mobility' perceived as most threateningly characteristic of prostitutes was the type feared of women in general, namely that indicated by their mere visibility on the streets. According to Matlock, Parent-Duchâtelet, while being at the heart of the project to regulate prostitution, rejected the introduction of a special uniform for prostitutes on the grounds that it would increase their visibility, thus 'infect[ing] public spaces with the mobile signs of vice'.²⁰ 'Mobility', however, not unlike 'hysteria', is a catch-all term applied to all women, whether prostitute or 'honnête femme', working-class or bourgeois. In all cases, it is what defines women's deviance from a pre-ordained and desirable normative track; in the case of bourgeois women in particular, it is what constantly threatens to disrupt the stability of home life and 'normal' procreative existence. According to Janet Beizer, nineteenth-century medical discourse exploits the powerful mythology of mobility to differentiate 'the feminine or hysterical personality (either term will do)' from the supposedly stable male norm.²¹ Gustave Bernutz, for

¹⁹ S. Rossignol, *Aperçu médical sur la maison de Saint-Lazare*. Thèse, Paris, 1856, p. 33, quoted in Alexandre Parent-Duchâtelet, *De La Prostitution dans la Ville de Paris* (1836), 2nd edn (1857), 2 vols, Paris (Baillière, 1857), II, 36-37, emphasis in original. Briquet (*Traité clinique*, pp. 124-25) confirms, in relation to Parent, that while 'plus de la moitié des filles publiques est atteinte d'hystérie à tous les degrés', the more extreme cases are to be found in less hardened prostitutes.

²⁰ Matlock, *Scenes of Seduction*, p. 26.

²¹ Janet Beizer, *Ventriloquized Bodies*, p. 48.

example, remarks that 'l'organisme féminin ... jouit d'une mobilité très-remarquable. qui contraste avec la fixité et la stabilité, qui caractérise l'organisme masculin'.²² There may be a physiologically determined mobility inherent in the female character, but in a wider sense, the 'mobility' of women as something to be feared can be seen in terms of their divergence from social norms in all spheres of activity:

The mobility that the doctors persistently cite as a female property, cause and symptom of hysteria, is, on the one hand, a medical recoding, a scientific sanctioning of an age-old adage ('la donna è mobile'), and, on the other hand, an updated replay of the traditional attribution of hysteria to a wandering womb. But there is much more at stake here; the focus on the vagaries of a woman's mind and the travels of her uterus serves to occult political issues related to the fear that woman will not stay in her place within the home, the family, and society, and the threat that, moving outside these traditional structures, she will dislocate ostensibly fixed social boundaries and values.²³

That is, not only is hysteria, the extreme and mobile expression of femininity, something which needs to be kept in check, but women's movements at large constitute a threat to the established order, and must be restricted if social and moral catastrophe is to be avoided. 'Fixed by medical opinion (that is, determined) as a mobile creature, woman still needs more fixing (regulating, stabilizing), to approach the male norm'.²⁴ The clinical reality of hysteria becomes secondary; indeed, it comes about that 'hysteria', in a metonymically extendable sense, is a feared social symptom, as much as a clinical cause or manifestation in one individual, of the enhanced possibilities for mobility of women in the Second Empire, where mobility is not just meant in a narrow physiological or psychological sense.

²² Gustave Bernutz, 'Hystérie', in *Dictionnaire de médecine et de chirurgie pratique*, ed. Jaccoud (Paris: Baillière, 1847), vol. 18, p. 185, quoted in Beizer, *Ventriloquized Bodies*, p. 48.

²³ Beizer, *Ventriloquized Bodies*, p. 48.

²⁴ Beizer, *Ventriloquized Bodies*, p. 48.

III. 'Hysterical Masterplots' and naturalist fiction

The doctors' inability precisely to pin down the origins of hysteria led them to what Matlock refers to as 'hysterical masterplots'; it is unsurprising that culturally refracted versions of them should become prevalent in works of fiction about prostitution, which very often contained confusing and contradictory information, even when authors were well aware that what they were writing conflicted with the scientific treatises which they consulted. This is all the more significant in naturalist fiction for the supposed attention to scientific detail paid by its practitioners. One text which incorporates conflicting views on hysteria, apparently endorsing the 'modified' uterine view (hysteria caused by frequent sexual activity, 'mobility' of the genital apparatus, and of the women to whom it belongs) while at the same time citing essential physiological factors as cause is the Goncourts' *La Fille Élisa* (1877).²⁵ Furthermore, in this novel a clear link is established between the heroine's prostitution and the murderous hysteria into which she descends, both of which are in turn associated with movement of one kind or another.

It is perhaps not surprising that Élisa's predisposition to the lifestyle she ends up leading has its roots in the 'procreative' environment in which she grows up. Her mother is a midwife, so her childhood is spent 'dans l'exhibition intime et les entrailles secrètes du métier', where her innocence is destroyed by exposure 'aux aventures du déshonneur, aux drames des liaisons cachées, aux histoires des passions hors nature, aux consultations pour des maladies vénériennes, à la divulgation quotidienne de toutes les impuretés salissantes, de tous les secrets dégoûtants de l'Amour coupable et de la prostitution'.²⁶ Her adoption of

²⁵ Edmond [et Jules] de Goncourt, *La Fille Élisa* [1877] (Paris: La Boîte à Documents, 1990). The work was started in the early 1860s, but was completed by Edmond after Jules's death in 1870.

²⁶ *La Fille Élisa*, pp. 39-40.

the profession which will lead to her hysteria is a direct result of her exposure to gynæcological realities. Exposure to typhoid, on the other hand, leaves her permanently psychologically damaged, so that while '[s]es facultés n'éprouvèrent pas une diminution; seulement tous les mouvements passionnés de son âme prirent une opiniâtreté violente, une irraison emportée, un affolement'.²⁷ This 'mobility of the soul', so to speak, becomes translated, once she is firmly established as a prostitute, into middle-brow cultural eclecticism and a life of constant displacement. Having become a voracious reader of 'une réunion hétéroclite des romans qu'avait fait publier en France l'insurrection de la Grèce en 1821', and 'des romans où des pèlerinages pieux [...] s'entremêlaient [...] avec des histoires de brigands, avec des amours platoniques', she is overcome by the desire 'd'accomplir des actions se rapprochant de celles qu'elle avait lues', and becomes attached to a *commis-voyageur* with conspiratorial secrets, following him around France (by railway) in search of the romantic exoticism and adventure found in her reading matter.²⁸

A partir de ce jour, commença pour Élisabeth une vie voyageuse et ambulante, une existence nomade promenée de province en province, par l'itinéraire du commis-voyageur, une succession de courts embauchages dans les maisons de prostitution du Nord, du Midi, de l'Ouest, de l'Est de la France.²⁹

Élisabeth does not even love the *commis-voyageur*, but is prepared to put up with '[l]es duretés, les ennuis, les fatigues de cette perpétuelle et toujours recommençante pérégrination'. However, her tolerance turns into contempt once it transpires that he is a trivial *agent provocateur*, and she resumes her life as a brothel prostitute, 'semblable à toutes les

²⁷ *La Fille Élisabeth*, p. 42.

²⁸ *La Fille Élisabeth*, p. 64, p. 67. The dangers of reading, and of education in general, are outlined by Briquet (*Traité clinique*, p. 112): 'Une éducation frivole, dans laquelle toute satisfaction aura été donnée aux sens, et dans laquelle la lecture des romans, la fréquentation assidue des grandes réunions, l'assistance au théâtre, l'usage abusif des parfums, la culture de la musique portée à l'excès, forment l'occupation principale, cette éducation a été regardée généralement comme une prédisposition à l'hystérie. "Si votre fille lit des romans à quinze ans, dit Tissot, elle aura des attaques de nerfs à vingt ans"'.
²⁹ *La Fille Élisabeth*, p. 68.

prostituées, avec, depuis cette liaison, quelque chose de haineux et de mauvais contre l'autre sexe, pareil à ce qui se cabre, est prêt à mordre dans ces chevaux baptisés: *méchants à l'homme*'.³⁰ However, her tendency to movement becomes all the more intense; she cannot remain for any length of time in one brothel:

En ce besoin inquiet de changement, en cet incessant dégoût du lieu habité et des gens déjà pratiqués, en cette perpétuelle et lunatique envie de nouveaux visages, de nouvelles compagnes, de nouveaux milieux, Élisabeth obéissait à cette loi qui pousse d'un domicile à un domicile, d'un gîte à un gîte, d'un antre à un antre, d'un lupanar à un lupanar, la prostituée toujours en quête d'un mieux qu'elle ne trouve pas plus que l'apaisement de cette mobilité, ne permettant à son existence circulante que de stationner le temps de s'asseoir sous le même toit.³¹

In this case it would seem that the psychological mobility constantly stressed by the doctors as being in the very nature of women is clearly related to Élisabeth's physical mobility, whether this be the romantic desire to travel resulting from the excitation of her already mobile character by environmental and cultural factors, or its centrality to the life of the prostitute. However, this is linked in turn with the mobility of the 'wandering womb' traditionally held to be at the root of hysteria. It is only after this mobility of the uterus, sexual organ or 'matrix', contingent on her life as a prostitute, has reached its logical conclusion in the murder of the soldier who becomes Élisabeth's *amant de cœur*, that her 'lack of fixity', to reemploy Beizer's term, is put to rights and is contained by the numbing panoptical routine of prison life.³²

The 'ébranlement perpétuel du système nerveux par le plaisir' resulting from the various types of mobility outlined above presents in Élisabeth physiological symptoms generic

³⁰ *La Fille Élisabeth*, p. 70.

³¹ *La Fille Élisabeth*, p. 76.

³² However, just as the regulatory system intended to contain prostitution has failed to prevent Élisabeth's murder of her lover, her imprisonment in an institution displaying a sign reading 'DIEU ME VOIT' only makes her condition worse.

to prostitutes.³³ The link between her psychological constitution, her physical activities and her physiology becomes progressively more intense until, in chapter XXXI, symptoms of hysteria present themselves:

Depuis quelques années, à travers des malaises bizarres, ce travail, où les sens d'Élisa ne prirent jamais qu'une part assez froide, commençait à lui coûter un peu, un peu plus tous les jours. Élisa n'était point ce qu'on appelle malade, non! Mais son corps, à l'improviste, appartenait, tout à coup, à des sensations instantanées et fugaces dont elle n'était pas la maîtresse.³⁴

Robert Ricatte shows how the symptoms described in this chapter, culminating in 'une série de phénomènes hystériques appartenant à cette état maladif de la femme qui n'a pas encore de nom, mais qu'on pourrait appeler: "l'horreur physique de l'homme"', derive, in many cases word for word, from the Goncourts' reading of Jean-Louis Brachet's *Traité de l'hystérie*.³⁵ According to Ricatte, '[l]a description des crises [...] s'inspire visiblement des notes prises sur Brachet. Celui-ci signalait "une grande mobilité nerveuse", "des contractions convulsives dans le corps", "des espèces de frémissements intérieurs"'.³⁶ However, the causes of Élisa's hysteria indicated in the novel conflict with Brachet's account. 'On sait que dans le roman l'hystérie d'Élisa est une conséquence de sa vie de prostituée', states Ricatte.³⁷ While hysteria as a direct consequence of prostitution might not represent the whole story, as the 'clinical' account is overlaid to an extent by the Goncourts' emphasis on more complex psychological factors, the recurrent 'répugnance insurmontable' and 'soulèvement de dégoût pour sa tâche amoureuse dans la maison',

³³ *La Fille Élisa*, p. 76.

³⁴ *La Fille Élisa*, p. 97.

³⁵ *La Fille Élisa*, p. 98; Robert Ricatte, *La Genèse de "La Fille Élisa"* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1960), pp. 59-63; Jean-Louis Brachet, *Traité de l'hystérie* (Paris: Baillière, 1847). 'Le carnet d'extraits de la *Gazette des Tribunaux*, que nous avons vu en train de se consulter le 9 avril 1863, comporte dans les dernières pages des notes sur l'hystérie. [...]. Il est vrai qu'ils ont servi également pour *Germinie Lacerteux*' (Ricatte, *La Genèse de "La Fille Élisa"*, pp. 59-60).

³⁶ Ricatte, *La Genèse de "La Fille Élisa"*, p. 60.

³⁷ Ricatte, *La Genèse de "La Fille Élisa"*, p. 60.

culminating in the 'horreur physique de l'homme', the symptom of 'l'hystérie misandrine' central to her murder of Tanchon (whose sexual desire lets down her romanticised expectations of him as 'le petit homme chéri'), are linked with the constant and repetitive exercise of her profession.³⁸ This link is consistent with the theory of Hector Landouzy, who, as we have seen, locates hysteria in the 'appareil génital', and links it with sexual activity. Brachet discusses Landouzy's view, and corrects it, placing the emphasis rather on 'l'excitation *sui generis* du système nerveux'.³⁹ In the novel, therefore, there is a combination of Brachet's view that hysteria presents itself in the 'constitution lymphatique' of the sufferer, with Landouzy's location of it in the genitals or uterus, allowing Éliisa's hysteria to be attributed to the aggravation of her physiological constitution by sexual activity. Common to the Goncourts' contradictory versions of hysteria is mobility, one symptomatic and psychological, the other causal, and attributable to the imagined wandering of the womb within the body. This latter mobility, scientifically untenable yet culturally resonant and fictionally both suggestive and plausible, could be linked with the physical and psychological mobility held to be characteristic of the hysterical prostitute. In their *Journal*, the Goncourts recall a conversation about hysteria with princess Mathilde, who, having read *Germinie Lacerteux*, in which the eponymous hysteric experiences 'quelque chose montant et descendant au-dedans d'elle', believes the brothers to be experts on the condition (an impression which they do nothing, apparently, to dispel):

³⁸ According to Charles Bernheimer, '[*La Fille Éliisa*'s] story of the life of an ordinary fille de maison who murders the only man she has ever idealized, because he expresses genital desire at a moment when she is dreaming of romantic innocence, is based on a medical description of misandrous hysteria [Brachet's]. The fantasy ruling this diagnosis seems to be that female sexuality, diverted from its natural purpose of marriage and motherhood and made into an instrument of male concupiscence, will revolt and destroy its tyrannical master in the name of "natural" purity'. Charles Bernheimer, *Figures of Ill Repute. Representing Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), p. 229.

³⁹ Ricatte, *La Genèse de "La Fille Éliisa"*, p. 60, citing Brachet, *Traité de l'hystérie*, p. 324. p. 345.

Et une grande conversation commence, de nous à elle, sur l'hystérie, la boule, le type physique de la femme hystérique, toutes ces questions de l'amour malade dont elle a une curiosité presque gourmande.⁴⁰

The 'boule', or 'globus hystericus', a symptom with connotations of a wandering organ within the body, is given recognition for general 'lay' purposes, even if in scientific terms it is a relic of antiquity. The achievement of *La Fille Élisa* is to situate precise symptoms of hysteria within a much more questionable social understanding of it, which however is necessary for the plot to work. Even if the scientific reality is somewhat different, it is fictionally more plausible for Élisa to become hysterically murderous through constant exposure to sexual activity (some of which, in relation to her colleague Alexandrine, is implicitly lesbian) than for her to develop 'l'horreur physique de l'homme' through continence or through her physiological essence alone.

If, as Ricatte notes, '[d]e la typhoïde de l'enfant à l'hystérie misandrine de la prostituée, la chaîne est continue, on peut suivre le cheminement de la maladie pas à pas', common to each stage in the chain of events in Élisa's life, as to each stage in her illness, is a 'mobility' of one kind or another which holds inconsistent versions of hysteria together.⁴¹ Mobility, for the prostitute, can also however be a cure for, as well as a symptom or cause of, the particular condition which characterises or results from her profession. This is the case with Huysmans's Marthe, who in the novel of that name, having fallen into the same trap as Élisa, but having been 'rescued' by the alcoholic actor and 'impresario' Ginginet, who will later exploit her sexually, still craves the mobile life of the prostitute, due to an unspecified 'illness':

⁴⁰ Edmond et Jules de Goncourt, *Journal. Mémoires de la vie littéraire*, ed. Robert Ricatte, 22 vols (Paris: Fasquelle et Flammarion, 1956), VIII, 121-22.

⁴¹ Ricatte, *La Genèse de "La Fille Élisa"*, p. 63.

Elle éprouvait, malgré elle, malgré l'horrible dégoût qui l'avait assaillie lors de ses premières armes, cet étrange regret, cette maladie terrible qui fait que toute femme qui a vécu de cette vie, retourne s'y plonger un jour ou l'autre.

Cette existence de fièvres et de souïeries, de sommeils vaincus, de papotages perpétuels, de va-et-vient, d'entrées, de sorties, de montées, de descentes des escaliers, de lassitudes domptées par l'alcool et les rires, fascine ces misérables avec l'attirance et le vertige des gouffres.

It is this very mobility which functions as 'cure' for the prostitute's lifestyle; the 'mobility' Marthe craves can be found in the theatre:

Ce qui avait sauvé Marthe de l'épouvantable récurrence, c'était d'abord le peu de temps qu'elle était restée dans cette maison, c'était surtout la vie affolante des coulisses, cette exhibition devant un public dont les yeux brûlent, cette camaraderie avec les acteurs, cete hâte, cette bousculade de toutes les minutes, le soir, alors qu'elle s'habillait et répétait son rôle. La fièvre du théâtre avait été pour elle l'antidote le plus puissant contre le poison qu'elle avait absorbé.⁴²

After the failure of her career as an actress, Marthe becomes the lover of the hapless journalist Léo, but deprived of employment and the constant movement associated with it, and, paradoxically, constantly in terror of the authorities, who know of her past and can inform Léo of it at any moment, she falls back into alcoholism and prostitution. Ginginet reappears to inform Léo that Marthe is a prostitute wanted by the police, and takes charge of her in an abusive relationship, from which she escapes to the preferable environment of the brothel, and in turn, having met a rich and stupid young man, to the boredom of the life of a kept woman. None of these situations proves in any way satisfactory. Even if the actual activity of prostitution can be abstained from, the prostitute's condition and recidivist tendencies are pathologically ingrained, as if she has been condemned to wander in eternity. In the absence of the 'pharmakon', as it were, of the theatre, a simulacrum of the mobility of the prostitute's lifestyle, the pathological compulsion to move asserts itself, as

⁴² J.-K. Huysmans, *Marthe, Histoire d'une fille* (1876) in *Œuvres Complètes de J.-K. Huysmans*, 18 vols (Paris: Crès, 1928-34), II (1928), 42.

Marthe, having dismissed her rich keeper, reminisces through an alcoholic haze on the various stages of her life, ‘comme les tableaux changeants d’un kaléidoscope’:

[L]a pensée qu’elle allait refaire à nouveau partie de ce bétail que la police doit surveiller et traquer sans relâche lui donnait froid dans le dos.

Elle ne se dissimulait pas les douloureuses voluptés de cette servitude, et cependant elle était attirée par elles comme un insecte par le feu des lampes; tout lui semblait valoir mieux d’ailleurs, le péril des tempêtes, la chasse sans merci, que cette navrante solitude qui la minait.

Elle se réveillait de ces visions, l’esprit détraqué, les joues en sueur, elle suffoquait dans sa chambre [...]. Elle se prit alors à errer dans Paris, et un jour qu’elle déambulait ainsi au hasard elle tomba, au détour d’une route, devant une caserne, à l’heure où les mendiants viennent chercher la soupe.⁴³

Although the end of the novel is rather inconclusive as far as Marthe’s fate is concerned, what remains constant throughout is the pathological disposition towards prostitution, and the movement inextricably associated with it. No actual illness (apart from alcoholism) is specified, but it is clear that the prostitute’s existence is characterised by a compulsive condition. As in *La Fille Élis*a, different types of mobility are central to the fictional depiction of prostitution. Mobility’s immense symbolic potential can be exploited in practically any context of the prostitute’s existence, whether this be hysteria, psychological impressionability or lack of fixity, the dissolute lifestyle with its constant displacement from street to street, client to client or brothel to brothel. However, while both *La Fille Élis*a and *Marthe* do exploit this potential, as novels they remain restricted to two main functions: the examination, in many ways documentary, of the life of the prostitute, and the presentation of the psychological or physiological consequences of prostitution for the individual *fille*. Furthermore, if there is any ‘social’ content in these novels, it is characterised by emphasis on the utter misery of prostitution, and its judicial or medical consequences.

⁴³ *Marthe*, pp. 126-27.

IV. *Nana/Nana: une genèse déhystérisée*

It was this type of documentary novel which Zola had in mind in the late 1860s. According to the original plan for what would eventually become *Nana*, he had intended to write:

Un roman qui a pour cadre le monde galant et pour héroïne Louise Duval, la fille du ménage d'ouvriers. De même que le produit des Goiraud, gens enfoncés dans la jouissance, est un avorton social, de même le produit des Bergasse, gens gangrenés par les vices de la misère, est une créature pourrie et nuisible à la société. Outre les effets héréditaires, il y a, dans les deux cas, une influence fatale du milieu contemporain. Louise est ce qu'on appelle une 'biche de haute volée'. Peinture du monde où vivent ces filles. Drame poignant d'une existence de femme, perdue par l'appétit du luxe et des jouissances faciles.⁴⁴

Already apparently present at this stage is a pathological determinism more complex than that which was to appear in the work of the Goncourts or Huysmans. Absent from the two novels discussed above, significantly, is the idea of harm done to the social body by the prostitute's activity, as is the strong emphasis on heredity, as opposed to mere environment. The pathological aspect of Zola's intended novel becomes ever more complex throughout its preparation. Prior even to the commencement of the *ébauche* for *Nana*, probably around the beginning of 1878, according to Mitterand, Zola's research on prostitution was complete, so the raw material for what might have been a mere 'roman de fille' became instead incorporated into a highly problematic meditation on Second Empire society (II, 1664). So while the initial plan contains the germ of the novel's subject matter, the symbolic complexity of a novel which is not merely about the ill-effects of prostitution on one woman does not become developed until almost ten years later. In Zola's *ébauche*, the

⁴⁴ Émile Zola, plan submitted to the publisher Lacroix, 1869, cited by Henri Mitterand in *Les Rougon-Macquart. Histoire naturelle et sociale d'une famille sous le Second Empire*, ed. Henri Mitterand, 5 vols (Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1960-67), II (1961), 1653-54. This edition hereinafter referred to by volume and page number. Goiraud, Bergasse, and Duval were to become Rougon, Macquart, and Coupeau respectively.

emphasis is transferred from the prostitute to the society, designated as male, which facilitates her existence as a prostitute:

Le sujet philosophique est celui-ci: Toute une société se ruant sur le cul. Une meute derrière une chienne, qui n'est pas en chaleur et qui se moque des chiens qui la suivent. *Le poème des désirs du mâle*, le grand levier qui remue le monde. Il n'y a que le cul et la religion.⁴⁵

Zola's intention at this stage is not therefore for a simple documentary novel, but for a *poème* with much deeper symbolic, social, even spiritual and mythical significance. This has the added effect of rendering problematic any simple pathological explanation for the prostitute's behaviour, since it becomes imbricated with a complex sociopathology, as it were, which is society's as much as it is his protagonist's. Also dating from the time of the original plan submitted to the publisher, and reproduced in the 1878 preface to *Une Page d'amour*, is the 'Arbre généalogique des Rougon-Macquart'.⁴⁶ The entry for Anna Coupeau reads: 'née en 1852. Mélange soudure. Prépondérance morale du père et ressemblance physique de la mère. Hérité de l'ivrognerie se tournant en hystérie. État de vice'.⁴⁷ It is instructive to compare this with what is perhaps the most striking interpretation of Nana's trajectory presented in the finished novel. Her rise to notoriety is, in the reported words of Zola's fictional journalist Fauchery:

l'histoire d'une jeune fille, née de quatre ou cinq générations d'ivrognes, le sang gâté par une longue hérédité de misère et de boisson, qui se transformait chez elle en un détraquement nerveux de son sexe de femme.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Bibliothèque Nationale, Nouvelles acquisitions françaises, 10313, f° 208, cited in II, 1665, emphasis in original.

⁴⁶ 'Il a été dressé tel qu'il est en 1868, avant que j'eusse écrit une seule ligne'. Zola, preface to *Une Page d'amour* (1878), II, 799.

⁴⁷ 'Arbre généalogique des Rougon-Macquart', II, 798. [Nana is in fact born in April 1851, in Ch. IV of *L'Assommoir*].

⁴⁸ Émile Zola, *Nana* (1880), II (1961), 1093-1485 (pp. 1269-70).

If this statement were held to be consistent with the description of Anna Coupeau which appears in the family tree, and which had not been corrected since the initial plan for the novel, then a possible conclusion to be drawn would be the equivalence of Nana's 'détraquement nerveux de son sexe de femme', as hereditary consequence of poverty and alcoholism, with the hysteria initially envisaged for her. This would imply that the version of hysteria in question was one which had its origin in the genitals. The inherited 'détraquement' of Nana's sexual organ, as well as perhaps indicating its hyperactive malfunctioning, suggests on an etymological level a deviation from the patriarchally preordained 'piste' of marriage and maternity.⁴⁹ Equally importantly, it is what determines her contagiously sexualised movement through society, and is at the heart of the very suggestive yet highly problematic expression of her pathological mobility in Fauchery's article in *Le Figaro*, as read by Muffat, in which the transmission of bad blood by heredity and the seemingly spontaneous generation of life culminate in Nana's embodiment as 'mouche d'or' moving upwards through Second Empire society:

Elle avait poussé dans un faubourg, sur le pavé parisien; et, grande, belle, de chair superbe ainsi qu'une plante de plein fumier, elle vengeait les gueux et les abandonnés dont elle était le produit. Avec elle, la pourriture qu'on laissait fermenter dans le peuple remontait et pourrissait l'aristocratie. Elle devenait une force de la nature, un ferment de destruction, sans le vouloir elle-même, corrompant et désorganisant Paris entre ses cuisses de neige, le faisant tourner comme des femmes, chaque mois, font tourner le lait. Et c'était à la fin de l'article que se trouvait la comparaison de la mouche, une mouche couleur de soleil, envolée de l'ordure, une mouche qui prenait la mort sur les charognes tolérées le long des chemins, et qui, bourdonnante, dansante, jetant un éclat de pierreries, empoisonnait les hommes rien qu'à se poser sur eux, dans les palais où elle entrait par les fenêtres.

(II, 1269-70)

If the hysteria/*détraquement* analogy holds, then, Nana's erratic movement might be read as that of the 'wandering womb', which, although long abandoned by the medical profession, was still potent as a metaphor. This is problematic in that at no point in the

⁴⁹ Détraquer – détourner d'une piste (Robert).

published novel is hysteria mentioned. In fact, when the family tree is updated in 1893 for publication with *Le Docteur Pascal*, the genealogical record of 'Anna Coupeau, dite Nana' has been altered so that it reads: 'Hérédité de l'alcoolisme se tournant en perversion morale et physique. État de vice'.⁵⁰ In hereditary terms, the terminology has become more precise, referring to a pathological state rather than to a habitual characteristic, while on the other hand, the result is less terminologically precise, the pathological term having been replaced by a vaguer designation. There is nothing in Zola's correspondence to indicate that he had read any specific text on hysteria. It might well be the case, however, that an awareness of the controversy surrounding the various pathologies of hysteria resulted in the absence of the term 'hystérie' from the work, precisely because of its implicit rather than explicit symbolic potential; that is, it is possible that there is an abandonment of precise pathology on at least one level (while on the hereditary level, it is emphatically retained) for the purpose of giving the description more poetic force and opening it up to a proliferation of interpretations, and perhaps elevating the prostitute to mythological status, so that she is not a mere hysteric whose hysteria has direct consequences for her alone.⁵¹ It is to be remembered, of course, that the description of the mythological *mouche d'or* is Fauchery's, focalised through the unfaithful bourgeois *paterfamilias* Muffat's reading of it. This fact alone is sufficient grounds for suspicion that there is a distancing between narrative and text, and that the novel does not propose a unique and definitive pathological explanation

⁵⁰ 'Arbre généalogique des Rougon-Macquart', prefatory annex to *Le Docteur Pascal* (1893), V (1967), 913-1220 (p. 914).

⁵¹ Hysteria may have been discarded subsequent to the 1868 family tree, but according to Mitterand, Zola's 1868 notes on Prosper Lucas's *Traité philosophique et physiologique de l'hérédité naturelle*, 2 vols (Paris: Baillière, 1847, 1850) were retained, and consulted again by Zola for *Le Docteur Pascal*. See Mitterand's *Étude* for *Le Docteur Pascal*, V, 1561-1666 (p. 1576). It is further to be noted that Lucas also subscribed to the belief that hysteria was invariably a result of stimulation of the mediate or immediate apparatus of sexuality (Lucas, *Traité de l'hérédité*, II, 719).

for Nana's 'mobility', but rather reports interpretations which are various and conflicting, and which yet can be traced to specific scientific sources.⁵²

If the possibility of a hysterical explanation is left open, there is already a marked difference between Zola's novel and that of the Goncourts, in that hysteria would be a pathological cause for prostitution, rather than a symptom of it. Leaving hysteria aside, however, the movement of the 'mouche d'or' can still be linked to views on female reproductive biology given wide currency in the nineteenth century, some of which had already been discredited by the time of writing of *Nana*, others of which remained current until early in the twentieth century. Chief among those apparently present in Fauchery's article are two strands of the work of F.A. Pouchet, one of which had been discredited by the early 1860s.⁵³ Both, however, have enormous symbolic potential. The element of Pouchet's work already questionable by the standards of the 1870s was his theory of spontaneous generation, or 'hétérogénie', defined as 'la production d'un être organisé nouveau, dénué de parents, et dont tous les éléments primordiaux ont été tirés de la matière ambiante'. Furthermore, '[c]ette génération [...], étant la manifestation d'un être dénué de parents, est par conséquent une génération primordiale, une Création! [...].[O]n le reconnaît partout où nous voyons paraître un corps organisé sans apercevoir un autre corps de même nature dont il puisse procéder'.⁵⁴ In this sense, the 'pourriture' resulting from a process of fermentation, and mobilised by Nana, might be read as an instance of 'hétérogénie'; for Pouchet, 'la fermentation et la putréfaction doivent être considérées comme presque

⁵² I use here the terms 'narrative' and 'text', and their derivatives, in a sense roughly analagous to that of the Genettian categories of 'narration' and 'récit'. See Gérard Genette, *Figures III* (Paris: Seuil, 1972), pp. 71-72.

⁵³ Félix Archimède Pouchet (1800-72), of the Muséum in Rouen, not to be confused with (his son?) Georges Pouchet (1833-94), also of Rouen, who helped Zola draw up the *Rougon-Macquart* family tree. See V, 1576-77.

⁵⁴ F.A. Pouchet, *Hétérogénie, ou Traité de la génération spontanée, basé sur de nouvelles expériences* (Paris: Baillière, 1859), p. 1.

indispensables à la manifestation des générations spontanées'.⁵⁵ And since such generation is spontaneous, it is hardly surprising that for Fauchery, Nana becomes 'un ferment de destruction', a pathological 'force de la nature', in that neither she ('sans le vouloir elle-même') nor anyone else has any control over her actions.⁵⁶ So while Pouchet's theories on this matter had been discredited by the early 1860s, the extract demonstrates their power to generate imagery in the popular and journalistic imagination, specifically in relation to the perceived threat of the working classes.⁵⁷ However, the imagery deriving from spontaneous generation is combined with equally powerful rhetoric on the nature of female sexuality, which intensifies this threat. The key extract here is the comparison of Nana's destructive activity with menstruation. An earlier treatise of Pouchet's, on 'l'ovulation spontanée', was one of many works which, despite any clear evidence based on the examination of women, linked human menstruation with animal 'heat'.⁵⁸ Thomas Laqueur points out that '[t]he whole cultural baggage of *brunst*, *rut*, *heat* – words hitherto applied only to animals – and the neologism *estrous*, derived from the Latin *oestrus*, "gadfly", meaning a kind of frenzy and introduced to describe a process common to all mammals, was subtly or not so subtly laden on the bodies of women'.⁵⁹ Now, the French 'œstrus', unlike its English counterpart which dates from the seventeenth century, does not appear in its current

⁵⁵ Pouchet, *Hétérogénie*, p. 352.

⁵⁶ Michel Serres writes: 'Nana née du fumier, de l'hétérogénie de Pouchet, vit des métamorphoses de la matière. Elle est vecteur, puissance de transformations'. *Feux et Signaux de brume*. Zola (Paris: Grasset, 1975), p. 244.

⁵⁷ Pouchet's conclusions were refuted by Louis Pasteur, in an 1860 competition organised by the Académie des Sciences to explore the question. See *Encyclopédie de la Pléiade. Histoire de la Science*, ed. Maurice Daumas (Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1957), pp. 1229-30.

⁵⁸ Pouchet, *Théorie positive de l'ovulation spontanée* (Paris: Baillière, 1847). According to Thomas Laqueur, 'by the 1840s it had become clear that, at least in dogs, ovulation could occur without coition and thus presumably without orgasm. And it was immediately postulated that the human female, like the canine bitch, was a "spontaneous ovulator", producing an egg during the periodic heat that in women was known as the menses. But the available evidence for this half truth was at best slight and highly ambiguous'. It was not until the 1930s that the hormonal control of ovulation became properly understood. Thomas Laqueur, 'Orgasm, Generation, and the Politics of Reproductive Biology', *Representations*, 14 (1986), 1-41 (p. 3).

⁵⁹ Thomas Laqueur, 'Orgasm, Generation, and the Politics of Reproductive Biology', p. 30.

scientific acceptance (that is, the stage of the menstrual cycle when ovulation occurs) until 1931.⁶⁰ However, the term 'œstre', literally denoting a parasitical fly, with which it shares a root, was certainly in medical currency in the nineteenth century, and indeed in the particular context of human sexuality; in 1806 Dr Joseph Capuron defined 'œstre vénérien' as 'désir ardent des plaisirs de l'amour'.⁶¹ The menstrual havoc and uncontrollable desire presented in Fauchery's article, and the poisonous and parasitical 'mouche couleur de soleil', frenetically mobile carrier of spontaneously generated filth, are thus, it would seem, all 'œstres' in one way or another.⁶²

Charles Bernheimer writes, in the light of Pouchet's theory of spontaneous ovulation which 'interpreted the menses as exactly equivalent to the animal condition of being in heat', that 'Zola associates this bloody flow with destruction and degeneration'.⁶³ However, it is not necessarily the case that Zola makes the same interpretation of equivalence. It is to be recalled that in the *ébauche* Zola specifies that the 'chienne', embodied in the novel by Nana, 'n'est pas en chaleur', and indeed, 'se moque des chiens qui la suivent'. Zola might well use terms almost identical to Fauchery's in his character sketch for Nana, envisaging her as '*devenant une force de la nature, un ferment de destruction, mais cela sans le vouloir, par son sexe seul et par sa puissante odeur de femme, détruisant tout ce qu'elle approche, faisant tourner la société, comme les femmes qui ont leurs règles font tourner le lait*', but it remains the case that, in the text, this view is

⁶⁰ Collins; Marcel Garnier and Valéry Delamare, *Dictionnaire des termes techniques de médecine*, 10e éd. (Paris: Maloine, 1931), in which œstrus is defined as 'Ensemble des phénomènes qui précèdent, accompagnent et suivent la maturation du follicule de Graef et caractérisent le rut chez la femelle des mammifères'. 'Œstomanie' is defined in an earlier edition of Garnier and Delamare (Paris: Maloine, 1900) as 'Nom donné à la fois au *Satyriasis* (homme) et à la *Nymphomanie* (femme)'.

⁶¹ Joseph Capuron (Dr.), *Nouveau Dictionnaire de médecine, de chirurgie, de physique, de chimie et d'histoire naturelle* (Paris: J.-A. Brosson, 1806), p. 232.

⁶² 'Œstre: n.m. (1519; lat. *œstrus* "taon"). [...] grosse mouche dont les larves vivent en parasites sous la peau ou dans les fosses nasales de certains mammifères; Taon: n.m. (1175; du bas lat. tabô, -ônîs, class. tabanus). Insecte piqueur et suceur [...], grosse mouche trapue dont la femelle seule se nourrit du sang des animaux.' (Robert).

⁶³ Charles Bernheimer, *Figures of Ill Repute*, p. 203.

ultimately voiced through one fictional character's reading of another's words.⁶⁴ The terms used by Zola are not necessarily meant to correspond to a true state of affairs, but are already part of an imaginative complex intended to create 'le poème du cul', in which Nana is 'la mangeuse d'or, l'avaleuse de toute richesse', the definite articles suggesting perhaps that these are preordained categories, clichéd roles assumed by the character in terms of how she is to be perceived by the society which holds her responsible for its own ruin. It is indeed perhaps the case that Nana, and *Nana* as text, are both engaged in mockery of Second Empire 'running dogs', such as Fauchery and Muffat, who associate socially destructive spontaneous generation with female sexuality via the spontaneous ovulation assumed characteristic of the latter, an association all the stronger for the powerful and doubly 'oestral' imagery of the *mouche d'or*. Irrespective of Zola's own notes, if the text does not accept Nana's purported destructiveness at face value, but merely reports others' attribution of it to Nana, then it must be asked who, in terms of *Nana* as text, is responsible for social degeneration. It is perhaps in the novel's depiction of movement that the answer is to be found, not least in terms of the framework within which movement occurs. If Nana's perceived destructiveness is connected with movement (and it is at least perceived as being so by Fauchery), then it must be asked whether movement in the novel, particularly that of Nana, is entirely independent, or whether the pattern which it follows is somehow predetermined.

V The Circulus

Nana's movement in Second-Empire society, as we have seen, is linked with scientifically dubious yet fictionally highly suggestive theories about the generation of matter. There is.

⁶⁴ B.N. N.a.f., 10313, f^{os} 192-93.

however, another significant theoretical construct underpinning Fauchery's description, suggesting a view of circulatory systems in society as being linked with circulation in the human organism. It is to be found in Zola's reading, expounded in *Le Roman expérimental*, of Claude Bernard's notion of the *circulus*, which draws particularly on 'une page de l'*Introduction* [à la médecine expérimentale] qui m'a surtout frappé'.⁶⁵ Bernard writes:

L'emblème antique qui représente la vie par un cercle formé par un serpent qui se mord la queue donne une image assez juste des choses. En effet, dans les organismes complexes, l'organisme de la vie forme bien un cercle fermé, mais un cercle qui a une tête et une queue, en ce sens que tous les phénomènes vitaux n'ont pas la même importance quoiqu'ils se fassent suite dans l'accomplissement du *circulus* vital.⁶⁶

The passage immediately following the above is quoted by Zola:

Ainsi les organes musculaires et nerveux entretiennent l'activité des organes qui préparent le sang; mais le sang à son tour nourrit les organes qui le produisent. Il y a là une solidarité organique ou sociale qui entretient une sorte de mouvement perpétuel, jusqu'à ce que le dérangement ou la cessation d'action d'un élément vital nécessaire ait rompu l'équilibre ou amené un trouble ou un arrêt dans le jeu de la machine animale. Le problème du médecin expérimentateur consiste donc à trouver le *déterminisme simple* d'un dérangement organique, c'est-à-dire à saisir le phénomène initial.⁶⁷

The key point for Zola is that 'une dislocation de l'organisme ou un dérangement des plus complexes en apparence peut être ramené à un déterminisme simple initial qui provoque ensuite les déterminismes les plus complexes'.⁶⁸ In Balzac's *La Cousine Bette*, Zola's prototypical example of a 'roman expérimental', the initial phenomenon in a process whereby the hypertrophy of one individual's sexuality produces a more widespread breakdown in society, is to be found in Hulot's 'tempérament amoureux'. 'Un membre,

⁶⁵ Émile Zola, *Le Roman expérimental* (1880; Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1971), p. 77. *Le Roman expérimental* (hereinafter referred to as *RE*) and *Nana*, both composed in the late 1870s, first appeared in serial form in *Le Voltaire* (16 October 1879).

⁶⁶ Claude Bernard, *Introduction à la médecine expérimentale* (1865; Paris: Flammarion, n.d.), p. 134, emphasis in original.

⁶⁷ Bernard, *Introduction*, quoted in *RE*, pp. 77-78, emphasis in original and in Zola.

⁶⁸ *RE*, p. 78.

Hulot, se gangrène, et aussitôt tout se gâte autour de lui, le *circulus social* se détraque, la santé de la société se trouve compromise'.⁶⁹ In this case, then, if we can consider *Nana* in the same terms, the initial 'détraquement' of Nana's sexual apparatus might be read as the root cause of the damage done to society. Significant in *Nana* is that the 'gangrene' and its progress are examined experimentally, at least on the surface, in terms of deviant female rather than male sexuality.

Bernard's model is intra-organic, and does not admit the possibility of the hereditary transmission of behavioural characteristics; it does not extend to the transmission of 'sang gâté' from generation to generation, never mind from 'le pavé parisien' to the aristocracy. Whereas the *circulus* for Bernard is a closed circle, the Fauchery model allows for the intrusion of external matter into it. It would seem in Nana's case that the initial determinism, at least in biological terms, is extra-organic and vitalistic in origin, or, alternatively, that the *circulus*, as a metaphor, is infinitely extendable. Certainly, the *circulus*, although rigorously set out and defined in Bernard's work, was not necessarily a new concept, to be understood only in his terms, which is indeed far from being the case in Zola's reading of it. The notion of the *circulus* had been current since the seventeenth century, and in the nineteenth century, was an important issue in early socialist thought. The Christian socialist Pierre Leroux, for example, took inspiration from St Paul's statement on the Church being a body made up of component organs, each impacting on the other.⁷⁰ Significantly, Leroux's understanding of the *circulus* allows for the regenerative power of 'engrais'; according to Leroux, it was 'bien absurde à une nation, telle que la France par exemple, de n'utiliser, dans sa production agricole, que l'engrais de ses quelques millions de bestiaux, et de négliger ou de perdre comme à plaisir l'engrais

⁶⁹ *RE*, p. 78.

⁷⁰ I Corinthians 12.12-20.

provenant de trente-six millions d'hommes'.⁷¹ Jean Borie comments that Leroux, 'dans son mythe du circulus, avait joyeusement intégré l'éternel retour au travail humain par la médiation d'une image mixte, le moteur à merde qui produit lui-même de quoi nourrir son fonctionnement'. Circularity is thus blended with spontaneously generative 'fumier'.⁷² Furthermore, Leroux had earlier, in the first of his *Sept Discours* (1841) denounced the notion of 'gangrenous' corruption of the social body by women, quoting in disapproving irony Joseph De Maistre's prophecy of the dire consequences of granting rights to women:

Vous verrez cette noble et touchante liberté dégénérer en une licence honteuse. Elles deviendront les monuments funestes d'une corruption universelle qui atteindra en peu de temps les parties vitales de l'État. Il tombera en pourriture, et sa gangréneuse décrépitude fera à la fois honte et horreur.⁷³

The perception of a threat from 'mobilised' women as political as it was sexual was not a new one, and the vision of the 'circulus' which it expressed contradicted, at least in terms of political motivation, the regenerative understanding of it. However, this did not mean that they did not share features which might be incorporated into a wider picture.

It may be possible to assert, then, that *Nana* contains a convenient mapping of a variety of contradictory ideas onto a fictionally 'organic' conception of society, at the heart of which lies the potential of unbridled female sexuality, combined with the miasmatic threat posed by the 'classes dangereuses', to disrupt the social body. Where the model corresponds with Bernard's is in the capacity of one element in the circulus (social in Zola's case, vital in Bernard's) to cause a breakdown of the system considered in its

⁷¹ Pierre Leroux, *Aux États de Jersey, sur un moyen de quintupler, pour ne pas dire plus, la production agricole du pays* (London: Universal Library, 1853), pp. 297-98.

⁷² Jean Borie, *Le Tyran timide. Le naturalisme de la femme au XIXe siècle* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1973), p. 48.

⁷³ Joseph de Maistre, *Éclaircissements sur les sacrifices*, annex to *Les Soirées de Saint-Petersbourg, ou Entretiens sur le gouvernement temporel de la Providence* (1821; Lyon: Lesne, 1842): this extract accessible online at <http://abu.cnam.fr/cgi-bin/go?lessoirees1,5345>; Pierre Leroux, *Sept Discours sur la situation actuelle de la société et de l'esprit humain. Premier Discours* (Paris: L'Auteur, 1841; repr. Geneva: Slatkine, 1973), p. 99.

entirety. In the novel, it would seem that the social circulus which Nana dislocates is infinitely more complex than the vital circulus of an organism. Indeed, there are several different, interlinked networks functioning at once, in all of which movement in one form or another, either by Nana or in some way connected with her, is a central factor. And it is not simply a case of Nana's motion through the social circulus; there are a number of mechanisms which facilitate her movement, or indeed, circulate her. And it is important that it is she who circulates, in a circulus which is to be understood as a pre-existent conduit.⁷⁴ The mobility of the *mouche d'or*, physiological, social, spatial and metaphorical, is central to the corruption and disorganisation of Paris, but the question is: does Nana move or is she pushed? Is her movement spontaneous, does it emerge vitalistically from 'le pavé parisien', is she condemned by her nature to be mobile, contagious? Or is she mobile in the sense of being circulable in a gendered economy of movement (and of everything else) regulated by men? There clearly exists a confusion over where the buck stops. Perhaps the point is that it does not, either on the narrative or textual level.

The opening of *Nana* might be read in terms of the inscription of Nana in a social discourse of mobile male desire, a circulatory system of the word. Before Nana even appears in the novel, she has been represented; she is the subject of discourse. The pathological mobility to which Nana is subject is already present in the social body which is host to the *mouche d'or*:

Les hommes tiraient leurs montres, des retardataires sautaient de leurs voitures avant qu'elles fussent arrêtés, des groupes quittaient le trottoir, où les promeneurs, lentement, traversaient la nappe de gaz restée vide, en allongeant le cou pour voir dans le théâtre. Un gamin qui arrivait en sifflant, se planta devant une affiche, à la porte; puis, il cria: "Ohé!

⁷⁴ Charles Bernheimer sees the circulus as being something which actually itself moves, but this is surely inconsistent with the Bernardian model. Bernheimer (*Figures of Ill Repute*, p. 218) makes such puzzling assertions as 'The origin of the circulus is death' and 'the circulus returns to its origin', but these completely misrepresent both Bernard and Zola.

Nana!” d’une voix de rogomme, et poursuivit son chemin, déhanché, traînant ses savates.
Un rire avait couru. Des messieurs très bien répétèrent: ‘Nana, ohé! Nana!’

(II, 1101)

Everything and everyone in this scene is in motion. The people entering the theatre do so from the exterior circulatory system of Paris, having been led there by posters and word of mouth. And the voices conveying information on Nana are mobile (‘Un rire avait couru’); indeed, a form of ‘ventriloquy’ is in operation. Nana’s body, about to be displayed, and its sexualised nature, have already been inscribed in social discourse by the circuitous repetition of her name through the social body, contingent on the body of urban infrastructure. Janet Beizer writes that ‘when Nana makes her début [...] she is both a textual and sexual phenomenon – in that order. The daemonic attraction her body is soon to exert is preceded and equaled by the magnetic effect of her printed name on the spectators, who are first her readers. [...]. Nana is [...] originally an effect of language, her name as much a force of contagion as her body will become’.⁷⁵

The contagious language of the vestibule results in chaos perhaps readable in terms of Zola’s above mentioned plan for the ‘sujet philosophique’ of the novel. This would seem to suggest that Nana is not ultimately to blame, that far from being the root cause of the ruin of the social body, she is merely a creation of the discourse of that very body, which has a male desire as its pivot. It is the curiosity of the crowd which is in heat (‘cette curiosité de Paris qui a la violence d’un accès de folie chaude’), not Nana. However, Zola’s subsequent comment in the *dossier préparatoire* that Nana ‘dissout tout ce qu’elle touche, elle est le ferment, la nudité, le cul, qui amène la décomposition de notre société’ (f^{os} 211-12, II, 1665) would seem to suggest a different picture. This confusion over who is to blame, from which neither narrative nor text, nor indeed perhaps author is exempt, is

⁷⁵ Janet Beizer, ‘Uncovering *Nana*: The Courtesan’s New Clothes’, *Esprit Créateur*, 25 (1985), 45-56 (p. 47).

perhaps approachable in the supply-and-demand terms of the modern capitalist economy, in which Nana, in common with the entire hierarchy of prostitutes (at all levels of which she moves), is a circulable commodity in a market governed by new means of communication and distribution in a reorganized city.

An important *détraquement*, as it were, closely linked with Haussmann's creation of a modern circulatory network, was that which disturbed the regulatory system surrounding prostitution. Haussmannisation was not only responsible for the demolition of several *maisons de tolérance*, official brothels constituting what Alain Corbin refers to as 'milieux clos', to make way for new boulevards, but also caused the departure of much of their clientèle, itself victim to demolitions, to the periphery of the city.⁷⁶ It was not so much the resultant visibility of prostitutes on the boulevards which caused consternation as the indifferenciability of prostitutes from other women. Such a collapse of difference, perceived in terms of class as well as of sex, was seen as a threat to the entire social order, in that a working-class *insoumise* might be indistinguishable from a high-class courtesan, or, even worse, from a high-society *honnête femme*, such as Sabine Muffat, identified in a guilty daydream by her husband with Nana in 'une parenté d'impudeur' (II, 1278). Nana does not neglect to remind Muffat that *honnêtes femmes* are not immune from prostitution: '- De quoi, putain! et ta femme?' (II, 1286).

According to Corbin, 'le dérèglement du vice, à la fois cause et symbole du dérèglement social, constitue par essence même la hantise des réglementaristes', not least because clandestine prostitution, hitherto defined as abnormal, 'risquerait d'entraîner la généralisation des conduites érotiques dans l'ensemble du corps social'.⁷⁷ The established

⁷⁶ Alain Corbin, *Les Filles de noce. Misère sexuelle et prostitution aux 19e et 20e siècles* (Paris: Aubier Montaigne, 1978), pp. 171-74.

⁷⁷ Corbin, *Les Filles de Noce*, p. 46, emphasis in original. Corbin (p. 42 and elsewhere) cites Du Camp's *Paris* as an exaggerated and almost delirious indication of 'la pensée des réglementaristes'.

order is threatened by this mobility of identities, sexual or otherwise, of which Nana assumes a full range. In terms of both her identity and physical person, she is emblematic of what Corbin refers to as 'la circulation du vice'. *Insoumise*, she cannot be pinned down as representative of any one form of prostitution, and once one particular prostitutional identity proves no longer tenable, she is quickly able to assume another.⁷⁸ After Muffat and Steiner discover Nana with Fontan at the end of chapter VII, leading them to withdraw their financial support, Nana moves from the boulevard Haussmann to Montmartre, where Fontan, to all intents and purposes, becomes her *souteneur*, and, if the elderly procuress Tricon is unable to arrange anything for her, she walks the streets. Although she may have enjoyed (and later resumes) a lavish lifestyle, it is clear that it is not so much wealth that counts as its circulation. In more opulent surroundings, there is a surfeit of luxurious goods; in Montmartre, there is an abundance of hearty food. Nana 'aurait pu parler par dix et quarante louis [...]; mais elle était encore bien contente de trouver là de quoi faire bouillir la marmite' (II, 1310-11). However, there is a constant need to acquire more money, even if it is not clear what the money is for or where it goes, and all the possibilities the city offers are explored. Nana's move downmarket to the periphery, both social and topographical, of the city, sees vice at its most fluidly mobile:

Il lui fallait de l'argent. Quand la Tricon n'avait pas besoin d'elle, ce qui arrivait trop souvent, elle ne savait où donner de son corps. Alors, c'était avec Satin des sorties enragées sur le pavé de Paris, dans ce vice d'en bas qui rôde le long des ruelles boueuses, dans la clarté crue du gaz. Nana retourna dans les bastringues de barrière, où elle avait fait sauter ses premiers jupons sales; elle revit les coins noirs des boulevards extérieurs, les bornes sur lesquelles des hommes, à quinze ans, l'embrassaient.

(II, 1311-12)

⁷⁸ Corbin, *Les Filles de Noce*, p. 192: 'Plus encore que la fille soumise, [la clandestine] se recrute et opère dans des milieux divers; il est beaucoup plus difficile, de ce fait, de la localiser au sein de la pyramide sociale; d'autant plus que la circulation incessante des insoumises entre les différentes catégories du milieu prostitutionnel gêne l'analyse et rend inopérant tout effort de catégorisation. Déjà fortement soulignée par Carlier à la fin du Second Empire, cette mobilité, encore plus accentuée par la suite, ne fait que refléter la mobilité croissante de la société urbaine'.

The description of Nana's mobility in the hierarchy of prostitution highlights not only what Corbin describes, with specific reference to Zola's novel, as 'ce mouvement perpétuel de bas en haut et de haut en bas auquel est soumise la fille entrée dans le cycle de vénalité', but also the centrality of the new thoroughfares to it: 'Elles revenaient toujours aux grands boulevards. C'était encore là qu'elles avaient le plus de chance' (II, 1312). Satin and Nana are only two individual prostitutes in a transformed urban circulus where prostitutes are omnipresent, and where topographical boundaries have become so fragile that whole districts almost literally move:

Sur les trottoirs de la rue Notre-Dame de Lorette, deux files de femmes rasant les boutiques, les jupons troussés, le nez à terre, se hâtaient vers les boulevards d'un air affairé, sans un coup d'œil aux étalages. C'était la descente affamée du quartier Bréda, dans les premières flammes du gaz.⁷⁹

In fact, the city itself is distorted in a fetid contagion which overcomes its male inhabitants, inverting social expectations:

Les soirs humides, lorsque Paris mouillé exhalait une odeur fade de grande alcôve mal tenue, [Satin] savait que ce temps mou, cette fétidité des coins louches enrageaient les hommes. Et elle guettait les mieux mis, elle voyait ça à leurs yeux pâles. C'était comme un coup de folie charnelle passant sur la ville. Elle avait bien un peu peur, car les plus comme il faut étaient les plus sales. Tout le vernis craquait, la bête se montrait, exigeante dans ses goûts monstrueux, raffinant sa perversion. [...] Du haut en bas, on se roulait.

(II, 1313-14)

As well as indicating that no section of society is free from exaggerated sexual desire, this passage also suggests that male desire, although excited by something which moves

⁷⁹ Corbin, *Les Filles de Noce*, p. 207: 'A la dispersion des maisons de tolérances au sein d'un espace urbain dilaté, correspond un élargissement du champ d'activité des filles de trottoir. Parties des quartiers ombrés du centre puis des boulevards de la périphérie, elles ont peu à peu pris possession de toute la ville. Leur interminable quête s'effectue, à Paris tout au moins, en fonction d'itinéraires complexes; la descente des filles, de la périphérie où elles logent, vers le centre où elles rencontrent leurs clients, constitue le mouvement le plus ample'.

through the fetid and fluid atmosphere, is already a depraved beast with perverted tastes, just as much as Nana is a 'bête' infecting a host organism with which she enjoys a symbiotic relationship.

Once Fontan has abandoned Nana for another woman, and Satin has been arrested, Nana begins to rise again. Despite her utter failure as a *grande dame* on the stage, in the city she plays this role perfectly, and it is 'de grandes dames' who imitate her. At the peak of her notoriety, she is also intensely mobile, but again, it is never clear whether or not she is the agent of her own propulsion:

Alors, Nana devint une femme chic, rentière de la bêtise et de l'ordure des mâles, marquise des hauts trottoirs. Ce fut un lanage brusque et définitif, une montée dans la célébrité de la galanterie, dans le plein jour des folies de l'argent et des audaces gâcheuses de sa beauté. Elle régna tout de suite parmi les plus chères. Ses photographies s'étaient étalées aux vitrines, on la citait dans les journaux. Quand elle passait en voiture sur les boulevards, la foule se retournait et la nommait, avec l'émotion d'un peuple saluant sa souveraine.

(II, 1346)

She may well move in a privileged manner, she may enjoy 'une montée' into the higher echelons of the prostitutional hierarchy, but she is always already 'lancée', and circulated just as much as circulating via all possible channels, be these vehicular, social, journalistic, photographic, or commercial. Here again, the interchangeability of identities is underlined. Another key episode in this respect, particularly in relation to the speculative economy characterising the Second Empire in which Nana is a commodity, is Chapter XI, when 'tout Paris' goes to the races. What distinguishes this meeting from the many others depicted in late nineteenth-century texts (such as those, for example, in *La Curée* and in *L'Éducation sentimentale*, with which this one has much otherwise in common) is the fact that the actual race is of some significance, not least because the starters include Nana, on whom a lot of money has been placed. Indeed, Nana's social success seems (at least to her, 'passionnée,

comme si le Grand Prix allait décider de sa fortune') to be dependent on the success of her equine namesake, with whom she becomes identified:

Nana, sans le savoir, avait pris un balancement des cuisses et des reins, comme si elle-même avait couru. Elle donnait des coups de ventre, il lui semblait que ça aidait la pouliche. A chaque coup, elle lâchait un soupir de fatigue, elle disait d'une voix pénible et basse:
– Va donc... va donc... va donc...

(II, 1403-04)⁸⁰

Indeed, there is a contagion of identity which is intensified by movement. The horse's victory convinces Nana, 'debout dans le siège de son landau' even further in her belief that 'c'était elle qu'on acclamait'. As in the pre-theatre frenzy, Nana's name circulates through the fluid crowd, without anyone being really aware of what it signifies, a racehorse, a woman or a nation:

Ce fut comme la clameur montant d'une marée, Nana! Nana! Nana! Le cri roulait, grandissait, avec une violence de tempête, emplissant peu à peu l'horizon [...]. Sur la pelouse, un enthousiasme fou s'était déclaré. Vive Nana! Vive la France! à bas l'Angleterre! Les femmes brandissaient leurs ombrelles; des hommes sautaient, tournaient, en vociférant [...]. [...] une agitation remuait les tribunes, sans qu'on vît distinctement autre chose qu'un tremblement de l'air, comme la flamme invisible d'un brasier, au-dessus de ce tas vivant de petites figures détraquées, les bras tordus, avec les points noirs des yeux et de la bouche ouverte.

(II, 1404)

The generalised confusion of this 'impressionist' scene is bound up with movement of several types. The fluid imagery of the 'marée', of the people as 'flot', is exploited to convey the transmission of Nana's name (both in the sense of its being 'broadcast', and of its transfer from one signified to another). 'Agitation' and 'remu[ement]' cause images and people to become deformed, their faces 'détraquées', their limbs 'tordus', in what appears

⁸⁰ This episode brings to mind the Ascot scene in *My Fair Lady* [not in *Pygmalion* however], in which the encouragement given to the racehorse Dover by Eliza Doolittle, the archetypal ventriloquized subject (and 'bonne fille' to boot), would seem particularly appropriate in the context of Nana's mobility.

to be a process of miasmatic contagion. No understanding of how movement occurs here is posited; only the visible impression of a thermal, miasmatic ‘circulus’ is accessible. The effects of this agitation spread through the entire assembled social body, from ‘le peuple campant sous les arbres, pour s’épandre et s’élargir dans l’émotion de la tribune impériale, où l’impératrice avait applaudi’. This ‘virus’ of emotion may move upwards socially, but it is not clear where its origins are. It seems only that it revolves around Nana:

Autour du landau, cependant, la poussée des hommes grandissait encore. La bande avait jeté des clameurs féroces.[...]. Et la cour de Nana s’élargissait, son triomphe décidait les retardataires; le mouvement qui avait fait de sa voiture le centre de la pelouse s’achevait en apothéose, la reine Vénus dans le coup de folie de ses sujets.

(II, 1405)

It is as if Nana is able to draw crowds of men merely by being linked with the horse, the original subject of their attention: ‘l’on ne savait plus si c’était la bête ou la femme qui emplissait les cœurs’. It is perhaps not even clear what the ‘bête’ is, especially in the light of the ‘coup de folie’ mentioned earlier, which brought out the worst in the ‘bête’ of monstrous male desire.

This confusion and indeed contagion of identities brings us back to the question of responsibility, which itself is transferable, circulable. For example, as Beizer points out, the blood stain outside Nana’s bedroom may on one level be read as a stigma associated with Nana, but is read by the comte Muffat as ‘a contagious trace of shared guilt transmitted to all who cross the threshold’.⁸¹ The contagion of guilt in question operates on several circulatory levels. First of all, there is a miasmatic circulus through which the effusions of Nana’s many lovers pass:

⁸¹ Beizer, ‘Uncovering Nana’, p. 55.

Lorsqu'il entrait dans la chambre de Nana, il se contentait d'ouvrir un instant les fenêtres, afin de chasser l'odeur des autres, des effluves de blonds et de bruns, des fumées de cigares dont l'âcreté le suffoquait.

(II, 1458)

As well as being a channel for such effluvia, on another level Nana's bedroom is, for Muffat, the public thoroughfare:

Cette chambre devenait un carrefour, continuellement des bottes s'essuyaient sur le seuil; et pas un n'était arrêté par le trait de sang qui barrait la porte.

(II, 1458)

The chapter in which this episode occurs (Ch. XIII) relates the respective fates of Nana's lovers, of whom Muffat is only the latest in a series, and has only acquired his current status on account of his position in a speculative economy where money is actually held in contempt, at least by Nana, and is merely what flows through the financial circulus and ultimately down the drain. The status of money is paralleled by that of men, in that both are convertible to dust:

Elle grandit encore à l'horizon du vice, elle domina la ville de l'insolence affichée de son luxe, de son mépris de l'argent, qui lui faisait fondre publiquement les fortunes. Dans son hôtel, il y avait comme un éclat de forge. Ses continuels désirs y flambaient, un petit souffle de ses lèvres changeait l'or en une cendre fine que le vent balayait à chaque heure. Jamais on n'avait vu une telle rage de dépense. L'hôtel semblait bâti sur un gouffre, les hommes avec leurs biens, leurs corps jusqu'à leurs noms, s'y engloutissaient, sans laisser la trace d'un peu de poussière.

(II, 1432-33)⁸²

This structure, built on a bottomless pit, is one in which men are prepared to invest, and in which they circulate freely along with their money, and with a multitude of other

⁸² See Michel Serres, *Feux et signaux de brume*, pp. 237-38: 'Ce qui circule ici, c'est le virus. Ce qui circule, en générale, c'est un flux de matière. L'ensemble des métaphores est d'ordre alchimique, mais le fonctionnement est exact, rigoureux. La matière en circulation est à l'état solide, comme l'or et les marchandises, elle peut être à l'état liquide, comme l'eau, le vin et le sang, elle peut être à l'état gazeux, comme l'haleine blanche ou un air empesté'.

commodities, in a downwardly spiralling economy ('un gaspillage effréné, un coulage féroce'; 'ce fleuve d'or, dont le flot lui coulait entre les membres'), in which men and money are currency, perhaps paralleling that of the Second Empire, which ultimately bankrupted itself through speculation while simultaneously sacrificing men (though not the bourgeois depicted here) as 'bétail humain' to the Franco-Prussian war.⁸³

When this economy collapses with the departure of Muffat and his money, Mignon, the *chef d'orchestre*, contemplates the havoc wreaked by it:

Au milieu de la débâcle de la maison, dans le coulage, dans le galop de massacre des domestiques, il y avait un entassement de richesses bouchant quand même les trous et débordant par-dessus les ruines.

(II, 1466)

His thoughts turn to *grands travaux* made possible by a speculative economy devoted to the facilitation of movement, whether this be of people, water, ships or capital. Nana outclasses all these other conduits, especially in terms of how, in such an economy, 'so much can be created from so little. A sugar refiner might be able to create an opulent château from a commodity as meagre as sugar, but Nana's 'monument magistral' is in fact created from nothing:

Près de Marseille, on lui avait montré un aqueduc dont les arches de pierre enjambaient un abîme, œuvre cyclopéenne qui coûtait des millions et dix années de luttes. A Cherbourg, il avait vu le nouveau port, un chantier immense, des centaines d'hommes suant au soleil, des machines comblant la mer de quartiers de roche, dressant une muraille où parfois des ouvriers restaient comme une bouillie sanglante. Mais ça lui semblait petit, Nana l'exaltait davantage; et il retrouvait, devant son travail, cette sensation de respect éprouvée par lui un soir de fête, dans le château qu'un raffineur s'était fait construire, un palais dont une matière unique, le sucre, avait payé la splendeur royale. Elle, c'était avec autre chose, une petite bêtise dont on riait, un peu de sa nudité délicate, c'était avec ce rien honteux et si puissant, dont la force soulevait le monde, que toute seule, sans ouvriers, sans machines

⁸³ If this analogy is extended, it might be suggested that blaming Nana for the moral degeneration of society is akin to holding Bismarck (whose name is invoked several times in the last pages of the novel, like Nana's at the theatre, and whose demonisation Blanche de Sivry attempts to undermine) solely responsible for the collapse of the Second Empire.

inventées par des ingénieurs, elle venait d'ébranler Paris et de bâtir cette fortune où dormaient des cadavres.

(II, 1466-67)⁸⁴

Mignon seems to be forgetting here, in attributing Nana's creation solely to herself, that he is one of the people responsible for putting Nana on the market. Furthermore, the massive human sacrifice suggested here does not include him or any of Nana's bourgeois 'victims'. Indeed, as individuals, for the most part they suffer no long-term effects, and hardly constitute 'un peuple d'hommes abattus à ses pieds'.⁸⁵ The novel seems to ironise much of the 'suffering' visited on the 'victims' of the movement of the 'mouche d'or'. Of these men, only Georges dies, perhaps because of his youth and innocence. Otherwise, Steiner's 'désastre' is to be 'réduit à vivre en honnête homme'; la Faloise's 'imbécillité' is 'satisfaite'; 'le tragique effondrement des Muffat' does not result in the end of their marriage (II, 1470). They and the others are ruined financially, forced to rearrange their lives, poisoned morally, but manage to survive as individuals. The real damage is to society, and to Nana herself. '[L]e virus pris par elle dans les ruisseaux, sur les charognes tolérées, ce ferment dont elle avait empoisonné un peuple' does not manifest any clinical symptoms in individuals. It is significant that she dies from 'la petite vérole' contracted from her sickly child, and not some serious epidemic. It would seem more the case that she is a minor parasite cast off by this social body and left to rot. She may have caused the ruin

⁸⁴ Peter Brooks writes: 'Zola's most extraordinary engine is not of industrial manufacture. It is the sexual organ of [...] Nana, prime mover of the Parisian social world who by the end of the novel [...] becomes the very motor principle of production'. In specific relation to this extract, he comments that 'Nana's sexual organ, which is nothing, absence, becomes a tool more powerful than all phallic engines, capable of supreme leverage on the world. Eros appears here all the more appropriately as a motor in that its mechanical operation is hidden, and it functions – as the whole imagistic system of the novel has made abundantly clear – through internal combustion. By the end of the chapter [...], Nana's *sexe* will – in the manner of Freud's Eros – claim a kind of mythic status [...]. Here is pure force, the *vis ultima* of the world equally devout to sex and to death'. Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot. Design and Intention in Narrative* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), p. 46, p. 47.

⁸⁵ Rather, the juxtaposition of Nana's death with the beginning of the Franco-Prussian war and the impending collapse of the Second Empire would seem to indicate who the real victims of senseless slaughter are.

of certain men, but there are as many men who have profited from her circulation on the market, and once they have had their use of her, turn to other preoccupations. A group of them, including the rehabilitated Steiner, gather after Nana's death:

Venus en flânant, pour donner un coup d'œil aux boulevards, ils s'appelaient, ils s'exclamaient sur la mort de cette pauvre fille; puis, ils causaient politique et stratégie. Bordenave, Daguenet, Labordette, Prullière, d'autres encore avaient grossi le groupe. Et ils écoutaient Fontan, qui expliquait son plan de campagne pour enlever Berlin en cinq jours.

(II, 1480)

The complacency of the men's fighting talk is matched by their lack of any sense of collective responsibility. While they are not directly responsible for Nana's death, they are facilitators of and participants in 'toute une société se ruant sur le cul'. Like Fontan, they may engage in ill-informed small-talk about the potential for contagion of *petite vérole* from Nana's decomposing corpse, but they remain oblivious to the significance of the contagion of bellicose hysteria on the street outside:

La nuit grandissait, des becs de gaz dans le lointain s'allumaient un à un. Cependant, aux fenêtres, on distinguait des curieux, tandis que, sous les arbres, le flot humain s'enflait de minute en minute, dans une coulée énorme, de la Madeleine à la Bastille. Les voitures roulaient avec lenteur. Un ronflement se dégageait de cette masse compacte, muette encore, venue par un besoin de se mettre en tas et piétinant, s'échauffant d'une même fièvre. Mais un grand mouvement fit refluer la foule. Au milieu des bourrades [...] une bande d'hommes en casquette et en blouse blanche avait paru, jetant ce cri, sur une cadence de marteaux battant l'enclume:

– A Berlin! A Berlin! A Berlin!

Et la foule regardait, dans une morne défiance, déjà gagnée pourtant et remuée d'images héroïques, comme au passage d'une musique militaire.

(II, 1474)

This is only one of several instances in the final chapter where physical movement is linked with frenzied contagion, and the power of representation and repetition to stir up collective psychological symptoms is made clear. What these scenes have in common, within the conclusion, and with other such frenzied episodes in Zola's novel, is the lack of any clinical

explanation for, the lack of any genuinely organic symptoms of, the ‘virus’ which Nana seems (‘Il semblait que...’) to be the victim of, having acquired it from her genetic *milieu* and spread it round society. No clinical explanation is offered for Nana’s death either. The progress of her illness is described by Lucy, during a journey along the boulevards, in terms of unverifiable movements and rumour, and with no definitive conclusion on how, or even whether, the *petite vérole* has actually been transmitted.

Au trot rapide des chevaux, le long de la rue Royale et des boulevards, elle conta l’aventure de Nana, en paroles coupées, sans reprendre haleine.

– Tu ne peux pas t’imaginer... Nana débarque de Russie, je ne sais plus pourquoi, un attrapage avec son prince... Elle laisse ses bagages à la gare, elle descend chez sa tante, tu te rappelles, cette vieille... Bon! elle tombe sur son bébé qui avait la petite vérole, le bébé meurt le lendemain [...] Paraît que l’enfant est mort de ça [...].

(II, 1472)

What this extract seems to indicate is attribution of particular symptoms, via rumour and conjecture, to an organic virus. But there is no real first-hand account of what Nana really dies of, what her symptoms are (apart from having become ‘toute chose’ here, prior to the pustular horror of the last paragraph) or of how any real virus is transmitted, despite constant emphasis throughout the novel on transmission and the channels through which it occurs. It is clear that the social body has been taken over by a contagion, resulting in fever, madness, and frenzied movement. However, there is no clear explanation within the body. It is possible that Second Empire society is depicted in *Nana* as having been overcome by ‘mass hysteria’, which occurs, according to Elaine Showalter, ‘when, because of fear or panic, people simultaneously contract physical or mental symptoms without any organic cause’.⁸⁶ Showalter writes that the victims, individual or social, of modern ‘hysterical’ epidemics, are reluctant to accept diagnoses which identify the cause of the mysterious

⁸⁶ Elaine Showalter, *Hystories. Hysterical Epidemics and Modern Culture* (London: Picador, 1997), p. 22.

symptoms as being within the body. There is always a tendency to look for an external scapegoat, which more often than not is viral, even if no actual causal link with the symptoms can be established. *Nana*, as text rather than narrative, lacks, perhaps by design, or maybe even rejects, a verifiable causal link between Nana's individual *détraquement*, the socio-sexual mobility associated with it, and the decomposition of the Second Empire. A genuinely organic explanation is supplanted by a problematic metaphorical system exploiting in no small measure the modern means of circulation and communication of mid-century Paris, which in the present reading parallel the arterial and nervous systems of the social body, in which Nana is scapegoated as being the convulsion-inducing wandering womb. It is not clear what the virus is, what its primary symptoms are, or how it is transmitted from person to person, or cell to cell; all we know is that Nana is its carrier, and that she moves. Responsibility is displaced from the internal workings of the social body to an external parasite which carries a spontaneously generated virus.

Showalter's understanding of hysteria might be more appropriate in the case of *Nana* than a nineteenth-century uterine one. Nana, like most prostitutes, does not, on the whole, display the symptoms of hysteria, although she is marked as a hysteric on the Rougon-Macquart family tree drawn up before the writing of the novel; and indeed, there is no mention of hysteria on the later version. Although uterine theories might consider women as essentially hysterical or mobile, in the sense that the movement of excessively mobile women such as Nana might be seen to be connected with dislocation or disturbance of their sexual organs, reproductive faculties, or by extension their entire physiological constitution as women, Nana's mobility is not specifically one of character, but one of displacement, both physical, through the circulatory network of the modern city, and social,

from one class of society to another.⁸⁷ However, her sexual apparatus is no less considered at the root of her movement. She is not a classic hysteric, but the 'détraquement' of what might be considered her 'matrice', that is, its deviance from the normal 'piste' of procreation within the family, its circulation as commodity, results in unrestricted movement on several levels which is highly sexualised. It is not so much a case of the migratory womb moving round one individual's body and giving rise to traditionally 'hysterical' symptoms, but rather of a circulatory sex organ, extendable to an unrestricted, unsatisfied female sexuality, moving through society and engendering a type of 'mass hysteria' with diverse yet 'mobile' symptoms. It is in this notion of unsatisfied female sexuality, wrought just as conveniently by nymphomania as by continence in the paranoid sexual and political discourse of late-nineteenth-century France, that the link with hysteria lies; the potentially convulsive threat to the body is manifested doubly by the idea of the virus, and by the hypertrophied sexual organ supposedly transmitting it simultaneously functioning as wandering womb. If there is a hysteric in *Nana*, it is not Nana but Second-Empire Paris. Similarly, despite being a force of contagion in an age obsessed with the transmissibility of illness, Nana displays none of the symptoms of venereal disease.⁸⁸ The society in which she moves is always already the carrier of any transmissible illness. In *Le Docteur Pascal*, Nana's story is summarized in terms which conflate two passages in the earlier novel (V, 1013-14). The first half of the summary is more or less a rehearsal of Fauchery's article, with the difference that it is not Nana who is 'un ferment de destruction'; rather, 'le ferment de destruction' is borne 'dans la vibration de ses ailes'. The

⁸⁷ 'La classe ouvrière est imaginée dans le grand corps social de la République fin de siècle comme l'utérus migrateur de l'hystérique traditionnelle'. Michèle Ouerd, introduction to Charcot, *Leçons sur l'hystérie virile* (Paris: Le Sycomore, 1984), quoted in Beizer, *Ventriloquized Bodies*, p. 49.

⁸⁸ David Baguley writes that 'by having Nana die, disfigured, of the 'petite' rather than the 'Grande Vérole'. Zola maintains the allegorical potentiality of the myth and its role in a broader thematic complex, that of the "bourgeois" order, submitting ultimately to the biological order of corruption'. David Baguley, *Naturalist Fiction. The Entropic Vision* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 211.

second part, almost word for word from the passage at the end of the penultimate chapter of *Nana*, attributes, however, both Nana's death and the downfall of the men who surround her, to 'une telle contagion dans l'air empesté de l'époque'. The seeds of the Empire's destruction are contained within it, and are not the result of an external parasite, brought back from Nana's trip to the 'Orient', always a convenient scapegoat. Indeed, it is the reported voice of received Second Empire wisdom which talks of 'la débauche crapuleuse du Caire', not Zola's. By having Nana move through the social circulus without any contagious disease other than contagion being specified, Zola indicates that society's obsession with viral infection, and tendency to represent its fears in terms of viral infection, masks its deeper-seated anxieties about female sexuality and its deviance from socially imposed norms.

Chapter Five

Beyond the Pressure Principle : Bestialisation, Anthropomorphism and the 'Thermodynamic' Death Instinct in Naturalist Fiction

Dr E.-J. Marey, the late nineteenth-century analyst of movement, observed in 1873 that 'bien souvent et à toutes les époques, on a comparé les êtres vivants aux machines, mais c'est de nos jours seulement que l'on peut comprendre la portée et la justesse de cette comparaison'.¹ Indeed, the notion of the 'machine animale' had been around at least since Descartes.² And while the work of figures such as Marey may have been predicated on a utilitarian political agenda, the logical end-point of which was the integration of human beings into a maximally productive industrial system in which they were merely working parts, his statement is borne out somewhat by the simple fact of the overwhelming and unprecedented presence of machines in the Western world in the nineteenth century.³ It should not therefore be surprising that the bestialisation of machines should be a commonplace in literature from the Industrial Revolution onwards, although, as we shall

¹ Étienne-Jules Marey, *La Machine animale* [first publ. Paris: Germer Baillière, 1873] (Paris: Alcan, 1886), p. VII.

² Consider, for example, Descartes's identification of 'ceux qui, sachant combien de divers *automates*, ou machines mouvantes, l'industrie des hommes peut faire, sans y employer que fort peu de pièces, à comparaison de la grande multitude des os, des muscles, des nerfs, des artères, des veines et de toutes les autres parties qui sont dans le corps de chaque animal, considéreront ce corps comme une machine qui, ayant été faite des mains de Dieu, est incomparablement mieux ordonnée et a en soi des mouvements plus admirables qu'aucune de celles qui peuvent être inventées par les hommes'. Furthermore, 's'il y avait de telles machines qui eussent les organes et la figure extérieure d'un singe ou de quelque autre animal sans raison, nous n'aurions aucun moyen pour reconnaître qu'elles ne seraient pas en tout de même nature que ces animaux'. Descartes draws the line, however, at human beings, which distinguish themselves from machines, as from animals, by their reason. René Descartes, *Discours de la méthode* [1637] (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1973), p. 53, emphasis in original.

³ On Marey, whose work may be seen as being 'in the direct line of the great Frankensteinian dream of the nineteenth century: the recreation of life, the symbolic triumph over death', see Noël Burch, 'Charles Baudelaire versus Doctor Frankenstein', *Afterimage*, 8 (1981), 4-23 (p. 12).

see, there are other more profound philosophical reasons as well. As far as the presence of such machines in fiction is concerned, pride of place is occupied by the railway locomotive. According to Jacques Noiray, 'parmi toutes les machines à vapeur que l'on voit apparaître dans le roman français à partir de 1840, il en est une qui bénéficie d'un traitement particulier: c'est la locomotive'. The main reason for this was that the expansion of the French railway network from 1840 onwards ensured the presence of the train 'dans le décor de la vie quotidienne'.⁴ This presence was first and foremost due to the mere visibility of the train: other machines were hidden from the (culturally consuming and producing) public in factories, whereas the locomotive appeared, literally, 'comme le signe le plus évident de la révolution industrielle. Prototype de l'objet technique, elle est la Machine par excellence, symbole unique d'un Progrès détesté ou exalté'. The other major factor was, in Noiray's terms, 'le privilège du mouvement.

[La locomotive] joint aux caractères esthétiques habituels de la chaudière [...] une qualité supplémentaire, le dynamisme de la vitesse. Elle unit dans une même image ambiguë, mais riche d'implications fantastiques, la double série métaphorique du bouillonnement diabolique et de l'animalité monstrueuse: elle est marmite et cavale.⁵

It would not be unfair to say that such representation of the locomotive reaches its apotheosis with naturalist fiction, and with this in mind several examples from the naturalist canon and from earlier genres shall be examined, but what this chapter aims to deal with specifically are the features which make Zola's *La Bête humaine* such a distinctive work, and yet at the same time an archetypal example of the naturalist exploitation of the mythopoeic potential of the railway locomotive. As we have seen earlier, an important characteristic of Zola's work is the manner in which it integrates

⁴ Jacques Noiray, *Le Romancier et La Machine: l'image de la machine dans le roman français (1850-1900)*, 2 vols (Paris: Corti, 1983), I: *L'Univers de Zola*, p. 69.

⁵ Noiray, *Le Romancier et La Machine*, I, 70.

elements from earlier literature, realist, naturalist or otherwise. along with contemporary preoccupations, into the highly systematic and interdependent scheme of representation of the *Rougon-Macquart* cycle. In the early part of the nineteenth century, some elements later identifiable in *La Bête humaine* as being central to Zola's project emerge as being part and parcel of the depiction of locomotives. Consider, for example, the following item from Victor Hugo's correspondence:

Il faut beaucoup d'efforts pour ne pas se figurer que le cheval de fer est une bête véritable. On l'entend souffler au repos, se lamenter au départ, japper en route; il sue, il tremble, il siffle, il hennit, il se ralentit, il s'emporte; il jette tout le long de la route une fiente de charbons ardents et une urine d'eau bouillante.⁶

Here already it is clear what the 'cheval de fer' is a metaphor for, without any need to mention it explicitly. That animal characteristics and behaviour, even emotions, can be bestowed upon the locomotive is self-evidently unproblematic here. Perhaps more interesting is the fact that the type of Freudian analysis undertaken in relation to Zola's work by Jean Borie and others is already invited here. If we are to accept (as Borie does) Ernest Jones's identification of the mythological image of the urinating horse as the ultimate expression of the sexual nature of movement, then we can see, as early as 1837, the status of the locomotive as an entity supremely rich in representational potential.⁷ The locomotive here is not just merely bestialised, but sexualised on account of the distinctive visible features of its appearance and movement.

This same imagery can be seen also in Alfred de Vigny's pessimistic philosophical poem 'La Maison du berger' (1842). In stanza 12 of part I, the poem's pessimism is

⁶ 'Lettre de Victor Hugo à sa femme' (Antwerp, 22 August 1837), N°. 1042 in Victor Hugo, *Correspondance familiale et écrits intimes*, ed. Jean Gaudon et al., 2 vols (Paris: Laffont, 1988, 1991), II: 1828-1839 (1991). pp. 420-26 (p. 422).

⁷ See Jean Borie, *Zola et les mythes. De la nausée au salut* (Paris: Seuil, 1971), p. 90, esp. n. 2.

expressed through the linking of the negatively presented 'taureau de fer' with the destiny of humanity:

Sur le taureau de fer qui fume, souffle et beugle,
L'homme a monté trop tôt. Nul ne connaît encor
Quels orages en lui porte ce rude aveugle,
Et le gai voyageur lui livre son trésor;
Son vieux père et ses fils, il les jette en otage
Dans le ventre brûlant du taureau de Carthage,
Qui les rejette en cendre aux pieds du Dieu de l'or.⁸

Nineteenth-century man, through misplaced confidence in this blind and implacable beast, risks the very survival of the race by allowing both heritage and posterity to be transformed into the waste of this mechanical relative of the Golden Calf. Here again, excretion and movement (this time uncontrollable since 'aveugle') are connected, but also linked with them are procreation, and the economic system which makes the whole doomed enterprise possible. There is also ambiguity over whether 'ce rude aveugle' refers to 'le taureau' or to 'l'homme'; in this sense Vigny perhaps suggests that the real threat comes from the darker side of the human psyche as much as from any mechanical beast. So while there is an explicit likening of the locomotive to the beast, there is also a hint at an undercurrent of pessimistic anthropomorphism likening humanity to beasts without reason, on account of possibly atavistic interior 'orages'. Indeed, the next stanza attacks the immediate satisfaction of base instincts in a world in which 'il faut triompher du temps et de l'espace,/Arriver ou mourir', and 'Le moment et le but sont l'univers'. Ultimately, however, 'aucun n'est le maître/Du dragon mugissant qu'un savant a fait naître'. Unless

⁸ Alfred de Vigny, 'La Maison du berger' [1842], in *Poèmes philosophiques* (1864), in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. F. Baldensperger, 2 vols (Paris: Pléiade Gallimard, 1950-), I (1950), 123-32 (p. 125). Although published posthumously in 1864, the *Poèmes philosophiques*, according to Baldensperger, were written during the period 1848-54. However, 'La Maison du Berger', according to Jean Baroli (*Le Train dans la littérature française*, p. 73), was written in June 1842, apparently having been partly inspired by the accident on the Paris-Versailles line in May of that year. The first published appearance of the poem was in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* of 15 July 1844.

drastic action like that advocated in stanza 16 ('Évitons ces chemins.') is taken, then, there is a risk that the creation will return to plague the inventor. The eventual effect of such an invention's being universally adopted will be that 'jetée au loin, l'humaine créature/Ne respire et ne voit, dans toute la nature,/Qu'un brouillard étouffant que traverse un éclair'. The implication seems to be that animality will override humanity.

This eternal struggle between animality and humanity features too in Maxime du Camp's *Chants Modernes*, but there is no question in this case as to who the winner is. In 'La Locomotive', a poem as euphoric about the triumph of the railway train as 'La Maison du berger' is pessimistic, mechanical beasts have superseded real ones:

Voyez ces chevaux aux cœurs fades,
Qui s'arrêtent froids et malades
Pour de minces estivalades,
Et qui se trouvent tous transis
S'ils n'ont des docteurs débonnaires
Qui leur donnent des vulnéraires!
Moi, moi! j'ai pour vétérinaires
Des forgerons aux bras noircis!⁹

Here the locomotive is distinguished from horses in the very moment of comparison with them. It is made less animal, and more powerful, through the human attention visited upon it. However, this human attention, significantly, is decidedly male, simultaneously paternalistic and sexual, and furthermore, the locomotive is likened to a woman:

Pas d'effroi que l'on ne ressente
En me voyant aussi puissante;
Pourtant, je suis obéissante;
Devant l'homme mon cœur s'émeut;
De mes vigueurs il est le maître,
Sur mon dos il n'a que paraître,
Et, comme un dévôt à son prêtre,
J'obéis à tout ce qu'il veut.¹⁰

⁹ Maxime du Camp, 'La Locomotive' (1854), in *Les Chants modernes*, 2nd edn (Paris: Bourdillat, 1860), pp. 197-203 (p. 200).

¹⁰ *ibid.*

It is entirely understandable that the public might be somewhat intimidated by the sheer power of this quasi-beast/woman, but reassurance is to be found in the control exerted by the benevolently masterful male. There is no danger of feminine 'vigues' getting out of control. The source of any potential disquiet on the part of the impartial observer ('on') is, at heart, the possibility of uncontrollable female sexuality. Whereas male control, like science and progress, is spiritual, objective, and free from the weaknesses of the flesh, feminine capriciousness is associated with the body:

Je suis le corps dont il est l'âme;
 J'ai beau faire tous mes fracas
 Et j'ai beau vomir de la flamme,
 Je suis faible comme une femme
 Et je suis humblement ses pas
 Quand il me touche de son bras!¹¹

When taken in hand, then, such potentially alarming flightiness, here again expressed in terms of 'bodily' emissions, is rendered harmless. The overall impression is that the lower urges, clearly identified as female, can be suppressed if the high-minded (male) objectivity of science is worshipped and obeyed. Science therefore plays the role once played by religion in exercising moral and physical restraint over the potentially unrestrainable.

According to Noiray, 'le roman seul pouvait transformer ce qui n'était encore qu'une curiosité littéraire [la locomotive], une image symbolique ou fantastique, en un thème complètement développé, aussi bien dans ses aspects les plus réalistes que dans ses implications philosophiques ou imaginaires'.¹² While there may well be a dividing line between the respective treatment of the locomotive by poets and novelists, there is

¹¹ Du Camp, 'La Locomotive', op. cit., p. 201.

¹² Noiray, *Le Romancier et La Machine*, I, 71.

nevertheless a continuity when one considers the locomotive in terms of the preoccupations discussed thus far. What prose fiction retains from the locomotive's previous literary manifestations is the whole complex of anxieties indicated by the comparison of locomotives to animals and women. Such anxieties were present in the *zeitgeist* as much as in literature. According to Andreas Huyssens:

As soon as the machine came to be perceived as a demonic, inexplicable threat and as harbinger of chaos and destruction – a view which typically characterises many nineteenth-century reactions to the railroad to give but one major example – writers began to imagine the *Maschinenmensch* as woman. The fears and perceptual anxieties emanating from ever more powerful machines are recast and reconstructed in terms of the male fear of female sexuality, reflecting, in the Freudian account, the male's castration anxiety. This projection was relatively easy to make; although woman had traditionally been seen as standing in a closer relationship to nature than man, nature itself, since the eighteenth century, had come to be interpreted as a gigantic machine. Woman, nature, machine had become a mesh of significations which all had one thing in common: otherness; by their very existence they raised fears and threatened male authority and control.¹³

While the naturalist *Maschinenmensch* might reach its apotheosis in the android of Villiers de l'Isle-Adam's 1886 novel *L'Ève future*, several of the features described here can be found in fictional depictions of the locomotive, where animality and femininity are closely intertwined. What is also found from 1870 onwards is the placing of such depictions within fictions which are not purely about the locomotive. Rather, the potential of the locomotive is integrated into plots dealing with interpersonal relationships and other traditional 'novelistic' concerns. A case in point is Huysmans's *Les Sœurs Vatard* (1879), in which the lives and loves of the Vatard family are situated against the background of the railway: their apartment is located on the rue Vandamme, adjacent to the Gare de l'Ouest.¹⁴ The descriptions of locomotives are not central to the novel's plot (or lack of it: it was characterised in this respect by Flaubert as a pale imitation of *L'Éducation sentimentale*),

¹³ Andreas Huyssens, *After the Great Divide. Modernism, Mass Culture and Postmodernism* (London: Macmillan, 1986), p. 70.

¹⁴ i.e., the present Gare Montparnasse.

but they are nevertheless very powerful in what they say about the effects of the modern industrial age upon human individuals.¹⁵ As we shall see elsewhere in Huysmans's fiction, there is an emphasis on the essentially pessimistic idea that humans, with their increasingly regulated lives, can be considered as having become mechanised and thereby ultimately bestialised, just in the same way that machines can be perceived as having animal and human characteristics. Chapter VII in particular contains many rich descriptions of manoeuvres in the railway yard as seen from the window of the Vatar residence (not the only such vantage point in naturalist fiction: in Maupassant's *Bel-Ami*, Duroy's apartment occupies a similar position in relation to the Gare St Lazare, as does la mère Victoire's in *La Bête humaine*).¹⁶ One such description contains all the familiar features of bestialisation and anthropomorphism encountered in the work of Hugo, Vigny and Du Camp. It is not clear that there is any distinction between the two:

Deux locomotives manœuvraient, mugissant, sifflant, demandant leur route. L'une se promenait lentement, éructant par son tuyau des gerbes de flammèches, pissant à petits coups, laissant tomber de son bas-ventre ouvert, des braises, gouttes à gouttes. Puis une vapeur rouge l'enveloppa du faite aux roues, sa bouche béante flambait et, se redressant et se recourbant, une ombre noire passait devant l'éblouissement de la fournaise, bourrant la gueule de la bête de pelletées de tourbe.¹⁷

Excretions this time are expressed (perhaps tongue-in-cheek) in highly vulgar fashion, and emanate from several orifices. The ambiguity of 'bas-ventre' leaves open to interpretation whether the emissions in question are digestive or reproductive. Normal human activity is kept in the shadows, subservient to the beast to which it is paying tribute, in an image which anticipates the 'ogres repus' found in *Au Bonheur des Dames* and *Germinal*. In an age where the status of such mechanical activity has passed from novelty to inconvenience

¹⁵ On Flaubert's reaction to the novel, see Baguley, *Naturalist Fiction*, p. 141.

¹⁶ See Juliet Wilson-Bareau, *Manet, Monet, La gare Saint-Lazare* (Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1998) on the significance of the Quartier de l'Europe to writers and artists.

¹⁷ Joris-Karl Huysmans, *Les Sœurs Vatar* (1879), in *Œuvres Complètes*, 18 vols (Paris: Crès, 1928-34), III (1928), 120.

(‘pendant les premiers temps, les jeunes filles avaient trouvé [...] toute cette vie de machines très divertissante. Aujourd’hui [...] elles ne constataient plus qu’un insupportable inconvénient’), it is perhaps to be expected that human dignity will have been effaced by animal vulgarity.

While it is possible to interpret the locomotives as animal or human, there are strong hints that they are essentially feminine. There are suggestions of childbirth and menstruation, both here (‘une vapeur rouge’) and in the next paragraph:

Elle rugissait et grondait soufflant plus fort, la panse arrondie et suante, et, dans le gromellement de ses flancs, le cliquetis de la pelle sur le fer de sa bouche sonnait plus clair. L’autre machine courait dans un tourbillon de fumée et de flammes, appelant l’aiguilleur pour qu’il la dirigeât sur une voie de garage, signalée au loin par le feu jaune d’un disque, et elle ralentissait sa marche, dardant des jets de vapeur blanche, faisant onduler sur le zigzag d’un rail qui reliait deux voies, la jupe de son tender, piquée d’un rubis saignant.¹⁸

The normal functioning of the locomotives appears to be likened to anatomical activity presented as being atrophied or abnormal. Similarly, there is an association with suffering, in an overall context of disquiet:

La nuit était complètement tombée. Aucun train ne sillonnait l’espace: l’on entendait seulement au loin, près de la gare de Ceinture, une machine qui ululait et semblait sangloter dans l’ombre; parfois des bouffées de vent s’engouffraient dans les fils du télégraphe et les faisaient vibrer avec un aigre cliquetis qui s’éteignait lamentable comme une plainte, puis la voix des locomotives en partance roulait, profonde et basse [...].

In the same instance, the menacing industrial atmosphere is intensified by the likening of locomotives simultaneously to human beings, fierce animals, and blood-red heavenly bodies:

A gauche, deux hommes, assis sur un banc, causaient, et le feu de leurs pipes luisant dans l’ombre faisait entrevoir dans un soudain éclair, des côtés de visages, des tranches de nez,

¹⁸ *Les Sœurs Vatard*, op. cit., pp. 120-21.

des bouts de doigts. – Plus loin enfin, sept ou huit machines, perdues dans la nuit, le dos tourné et le trou béant, fumaient. On eût dit des lunes rouges, rangées les unes à côté des autres, et les lunes jaunes des cadrans de l'embarcadère et du pont s'élevaient plus haut, dominées encore par le disque étincelant de la lune qui, émergeant des nuées comme d'un lac d'eau sombre, poudra de sa limaille d'argent tout le champ des manœuvres.¹⁹

At the same time that the men's humanity is effaced, in that they are made little more than the sum of body parts, the locomotives take on animal features and engage in human activities. The locomotives appear able to take on the characteristics of elements of their surroundings, whether these be of the smoking men or the moonlight. Indeed, this would appear to indicate a world-view either espoused, or (as in this case, apparently) pessimistically described, by the narrator, according to which all matter has become equalised: human beings can be considered, observed, in the same way as beasts, machines; all of these can be considered in terms of any natural phenomenon. Such is the modern industrialised world that different strands of nature lose their individual character.

This 'equalisation' seems often to be a result of boredom or unhappiness. *Les Sœurs Vatarde* may well contain the first instance of literary 'trainspotting', along with an indication that this taxonomising activity is a result of dissatisfaction and disenchantment with the world on the part of the protagonists. Point of view is crucial in this regard. The descriptions of locomotives, always presented from the vantage point of the sisters' window, must not necessarily be seen as being part of the discourse of the novel itself. The focalisation of the descriptions perhaps represents an indication that such ways of perceiving machines have become commonplace among the general public. Furthermore, it is almost by chance that the novel contains so many detailed descriptions of locomotives: the sisters might as well relieve their boredom by observing any other natural phenomenon, but happen to live beside a station. And indeed, in a very rich passage in the latter part of the novel, the equivalence of (wo)man, beast and machine is made clear. The only

¹⁹ *Les Sœurs Vatarde*, op. cit., pp. 127-28.

differences given any attention are trivial differences between ‘creatures’ of the same ‘species’. What they observe contains practically all the elements of the naturalist vision of railway transport. Bored one Sunday, they observe and envy the multitude of day-trippers (‘les trains de Versailles se succédaient de dix en dix minutes’). These ‘cattle’ are described nevertheless with contempt by the narrative, which sneers at ‘ce contentement des gens qui, après avoir pâti pendant toute une semaine, derrière des comptoirs, ferment leurs volets le dimanche’. The features of such animal behaviour are enumerated at great length, with no sordid digestive detail spared:

[C]ette satisfaction imbécile de porter, à cheval sur une canne, le panier aux provisions; ces dinettes avec du papier gras sur l’herbe; ces retours avec des bottelettes de fleurs; ces cabrioles, ces cris, ces hurlées stupides sur les routes; ces débraillés de costumes, ces habits bas, ces chemises bouffant de la culotte, ces corsets débridés, ces ceintures lâchant la taille de plusieurs crans; ces parties de cache-cache et de visa dans des buissons empuantis par toutes les ordures des repas terminés et rendus, leur firent envie.²⁰

While this naturalist enumeration is not specifically about trains, it does discuss in ironic fashion the behaviour of excursionists, complete with all the base details of the *partie de plaisir* undertaken on public transport. Its significance in this particular episode lies in its proximity to the description of the sisters’ enumerative and obsessive observation of trains in the railway yard. Again, it is not as if the locomotives have any inherent interest in themselves; the sisters have become expert ‘trainspotters’ for want of anything better to do:

Par désœuvrement, elles observaient les moindres détails du chemin de fer, le miroitement des poignées de cuivre des voitures, les bouillons de leurs vitres; écoutaient le tic tac du télégraphe, le bruit doux que font les wagons qui glissent, poussés par des hommes; considéraient les couleurs différentes des fumées de machines, des fumées qui variaient du blanc au noir, du bleu au gris et se teintaient parfois de jaune, du jaune sale et pesant des bains de Barège; et elles reconnaissaient chaque locomotive, savaient son nom, lisaient sur son flanc l’usine où elle était née; chantiers et ateliers de l’Océan, Cail et Cie, usine de Graffenstaden, Kœchlin à Mulhouse, Schneider au Creusot, Gouin aux Batignolles, Claparède à Saint-Denis, participation Cail, Parent, Schalken et Cie de Fives-Lille; et elles

²⁰ *Les Sœurs Vatard*, op. cit., p. 236.

se montraient la différence des bêtes, les frêles et les fortes, les petiotes sans tenders pour les trains de banlieue, les grosses pataudes pour les convois à marchandises.²¹

If the Sunday-outing brigade are debased to the point of animality and are all alike, the locomotives, conversely, have taken on animal, if not indeed human qualities, and obsessive study of them yields meaningful difference, giving the impression that each has a distinctive character. Where there is only similarity in the bovine humans (cattle being a recurrent designation for railway passengers in naturalist fiction), who engage in the same activities down to the very last dreary detail, each locomotive, on the other hand, has an identity, and even a lineage, depending on 'l'usine où elle était née'. A picture is presented of a world where machines have superseded humans in terms of originality and meaning. If all the machines have their own individual characteristics, then individual locomotives can be described in great technical detail:

Puis, leur attention se fixait sur une machine en panne et elles regardaient le monstrueux outillage de ses roues, le remuement d'abord silencieux et doux des pistons entrant dans les cylindres, puis leurs efforts multipliés, leurs va-et-vient rapides, toute l'effroyable mêlée de ces bielles et de ces tiges; elles regardaient les éclairs de la boîte à feu, les dégorgements des robinets de vidange et de purge; elles écoutaient le hoquet de la locomotive qui se met en marche, le sifflement saccadé de ses jets, ses cris stridulés, ses ahans rauques.²²

As well as getting across the point that machines have more individuality than humans, this passage also indicates a considerable amount of technically detailed information, and ultimately, of research by the author. Also significant here is the fact that the sisters have already at this point identified a favourite locomotive, which features as part of their habitual observations:

Elles avaient des joies d'enfants lorsqu'elles en apercevaient une, une toute petite, réservée pour la traction des marchandises dans la gare et pour les travaux de la voie, une mignonne,

²¹ *Les Sœurs Vatard*, op. cit., pp. 236-37.

²² *Les Sœurs Vatard*, op. cit., p. 237.

élégante et délurée, avec sa toiture de fer pour abriter les chauffeurs et ses grosses lunettes sur l'arrière-train.

Celle-là était leur préférée. A force de la voir décrire ses zigzags et ses courbes et siffler gaiement aux aiguilles, elles l'avaient prise en affection. Le matin, dès qu'elles se levaient et entr'ouvraient leurs rideaux, la petite était là, alerte et pimpante, fumant sans bruit, et elles lui disaient en riant bonjour.²³

Not only does this particular locomotive have a distinctive character and name; when it is absent on this particular Sunday ('mais ce dimanche-là, la mioche, comme elles l'appelaient, était restée dans son écurie'), its absence becomes identified with that of Céline's lover Auguste, and the sisters' disappointment at the absence of one is mirrored in the absence of the other.

The interchangeability of locomotive, man and beast is also to be found in Huysmans's contribution to *Les Soirées de Médan*, 'Sac au dos' (1880), a story about young recruits travelling in convoy to the front during the Franco-Prussian war, only to sit out most of the campaign in hospital. Although it is essentially a humorous tale (the encounter between the protagonist returning to Paris and the young woman in the railway carriage exhibiting several parallels with some of the Maupassant *Contes* to be discussed in the next chapter), no opportunity is missed to hammer home the dehumanising effects of war, and indeed ultimately of the society which has gone to war. The railway is very well exploited in reinforcing the dehumanising process. It is clear from the start that if locomotives, as in other fictions, are active beings with animal or human excretory capacities, spewing out 'des gerbes d'étincelles', 'hurlant et crachant des flammes', and 'fuma[nt] et vomissa[nt] sans relâche des flammèches', the passengers on trains to the front are passive creatures, with no control over their temporal destination or final destiny.²⁴ Indeed, they may as well be the fuel shoveled into the firebox: 'Nous étions une pelletée de

²³ *Les Sœurs Vatard*, op. cit., pp. 237-38.

²⁴ Joris-Karl Huysmans, 'Sac au Dos', in *Les Soirées de Médan* (1880), ed. Colette Becker (Paris: Le Livre à venir, 1981 [based on 1930 Fasquelle edition]), pp. 121-51 (p. 123; p. 124; p. 131).

cinquante hommes dans la boîte qui nous roulait'.²⁵ This idea of passivity is very often combined with characterisation of the men as cattle ('on nous empila comme des bestiaux dans des wagons') or as the equivalent of animal cargo or military matériel, the latter taking on human features ('un interminable train d'artillerie passa à toute vapeur, charriant des chevaux, des hommes, des canons dont les cous de bronze étincelaient').²⁶ After they are injured, the narrator and his companion are transported by mule, which beast displays characteristics of a machine. At one point, 'le système [i.e. the mule] bascula'; subsequently, after travelling through 'un tourbillon de poussière, aveuglés, ahuris, secoués', they arrive in Châlons 'plus morts que vifs; nous tombâmes comme un bétail harassé sur le sable puis on nous empila dans les wagons et nous quittâmes la ville pour aller où?'.²⁷ What the tale combines, therefore, is a sense of powerlessness and lack of control, along with beasts that are like machines, machines that are like beasts, and dehumanised people, themselves reduced at best to the level of cattle.

It is in *A Rebours* (1884), perhaps Huysmans's best-known novel, that the most intense disenchantment with modern society and its dehumanising tendencies is to be found. In this case, dehumanisation comes about as a result of self-imposed retreat from the real world into the realm of artifice, and as such is part of a general 'denaturalisation'. Des Esseintes is the ultimate 'trainspotter', in his remote despondency creating repertoires for their own sake. It does not matter what these repertoires are of, it does not matter that he has no particular personal investment in any of them, and this is no less the case when he comes to describe locomotives. Essential, as it were, to his conception of nature, 'cette sempiternelle radoteuse', is its apparent inferiority to artifice, which, ultimately, should

²⁵ Huysmans, 'Sac au dos', op. cit., p. 123. The verb 'rouler' here might also be read in terms of its meaning 'to trick' or 'to take for a ride'.

²⁶ 'Sac au dos', op. cit., p. 123, p. 124.

²⁷ 'Sac au dos', op. cit., pp. 129-30.

replace it. It is to be borne in mind here that although the opinions in the passage in question are conveyed by the narrator, it is made clear immediately afterwards that these are Des Esseintes's 'réflexions'. According to Jonathan Patrick, Huysmans does not, as is widely taken for granted, celebrate pure artifice, but rather values the pure essence of the natural. Very often the views of Des Esseintes are misrepresented as being those of Huysmans, whereas the fashionable elevation of the artificial over the real is in fact something the novel arguably sets out to condemn. Indeed, 'nature and the real will out, they will destroy those who try to take refuge in artifice'.²⁸ In Des Esseintes's world, then, which is not necessarily Huysmans's, the ultimate expression of the presumed capacity of artifice to outdo nature is in the matter of beauty. If 'la femme' is nature's most beautiful creation, 'celle de ses œuvres considérée comme la plus exquise', then she will easily be surpassed by artifice's attempts at beauty. Indeed, why should there be any need for her, or for the emotional and physical effort involved in producing her, when 'un être animé et factice qui la vaut amplement' has been created in 'ces deux locomotives adoptées sur la ligne du chemin de fer du Nord'? Des Esseintes, however, still has to rely on vocabulary pertaining to taxonomies of women in order to distinguish fully between the two engines:

L'une, la Crampton, une adorable blonde, à la voix aiguë, à la grande taille frêle, emprisonnée dans un étincelant corset de cuivre, au souple et nerveux allongement de chatte, une blonde pimpante et dorée, dont l'extraordinaire grâce épouvante lorsque, raidissant ses muscles d'acier, activant la sueur de ses flancs tièdes, elle met en branle l'immense rosace de sa fine roue et s'élance toute vivante, en tête des rapides et des marées!

L'autre, l'Engerth, une monumentale et sombre brune aux cris sourds et rauques, aux reins trapus, étranglés dans une cuirasse en fonte, une monstrueuse bête, à la crinière échevelée de fumée noire, aux six roues basses et accouplées; quelle écrasante puissance lorsque, faisant trembler la terre, elle remorque pesamment, lentement, la lourde queue de ses marchandises!²⁹

²⁸ Joris-Karl Huysmans, *A Rebours* (Paris: Folio Gallimard, 1977), pp. 103-05 (p. 103; p. 105); Jonathan Patrick, 'Des Esseintes / Des Essences?: Huysmans, Chemistry and Nature', in *La Nature dévoilée. French Literary Responses to Science*, ed. by Larry Duffy and Catherine Emerson (Hull: University of Hull, 2000), pp. 105-18 (p. 116).

²⁹ *A Rebours*, pp. 103-04.

What is interesting here is that while 'la Crampton' is described in unambiguously human terms, possessing a voice, wearing a corset (just as in *Les Sœurs Vatard* the locomotives are clad in 'jupes'), the Engerth, perhaps more menacing, is decidedly animal, her feminine charms ending with her being a 'brune'. She is in fact perhaps 'monstrueuse' on account of neither being fully human nor animal. There is a subtle contrast too between the healthy vitality of the blonde, and the seemingly uncontrollable 'écrasante puissance' of the brunette, who, furthermore, is tainted (prostituted, even?) by involvement in the world of commodified commerce, as suggested by the negative presentation of 'la lourde queue de ses marchandises' (it is to be remembered also that the fact that these two beauties are based on 'types', and therefore commodities, is emphasised). So, in a world in which nature is devalued and artificial reproduction held up as a virtue, even if artifice has the capacity to produce 'beings' which surpass humans in terms of beauty, the threat of the merciless (or indeed mercenary) beast is always present beneath the apparently human surface. Where there is 'svelte délicate', there is also 'terrifiante force', and it is with understated irony that the narrator points out that 'à coup sûr, on peut le dire: l'homme a fait, dans son genre, aussi bien que le Dieu auquel il croit'; that is to say, if man decides to usurp the role of God or nature, then he must accept the beastly (in)human consequences as well as the aesthetically satisfying ones.

It is also worth noting that if one of the engines is possessed of more human qualities than the other, it is perhaps because it is used for passenger trains, whereas the other with which it is compared is used for goods transport.³⁰ That is, even if the lives of people have been rendered much easier by the advent of rapid passenger transport, the

³⁰ See nn. 32-33 in *A Rebours*, pp. 395-96.

system within which this occurs is bound up with an essentially dehumanising industrial economy.

One of the great ironies here, as elsewhere, is that late nineteenth-century industrial society is supposedly the apotheosis of the human spirit, an age of progress and perfectibility. It is in this particular context (and only this one, if truth be told) that Jules Claretie's *Le Train 17* (1877), a novel which is often derided and to a certain (albeit limited) extent underrated, perhaps warrants greater serious consideration than it has heretofore been afforded. Although it is essentially a rather preposterous melodrama which relates a story of circus performers into which a locomotive driver intrudes, as opposed to a tale of railway folk, there is perhaps more to it than commentators such as Noiray have made out, if only for the presence of the unique character approaching any sort of sophistication, Martial Hébert. What Claretie produces in Martial, however unsubtly, is a character through whom male sexuality is linked with the technical functioning of the locomotive. Martial also provides a starting point for an exploration of the notion of human perfectibility in parallel with technical perfectibility, which suggests that progress may be an unachievable ideal.

Martial, as with brick-like subtlety his name suggests ('ce nom vaillant, mâle et hardi semblait en vérité le seul qui pût lui convenir'; 'Il y avait chez cet homme une mâle nature de soldat'), is resoundingly male, and his vocation as an engine-driver is bound up with a belief in an ideal of the perfect machine as the ultimate expression of masculinity. When challenged about his calling, he makes this quite clear:

Les chemins de fer, les machines, tous ces êtres de fonte ou de fer qui semblent vivants et qui, de leurs muscles de cuivre ou d'acier, remplacent les muscles de l'homme, cela me tente.³¹

³¹ Jules Claretie, *Le Train 17* [1877](Paris: Dentu, 1890), p. 93, p. 113.

Furthermore, there is a quasi-sexual element to the pleasure he derives from the challenge involved in driving a train. 'Martial aimait ce métier dur. Ces courses quotidiennes, à toute vapeur, à travers les champs qui fuyaient, il y trouvait des jouissances inattendues, des voluptés mâles'. This eroticised attachment to his job does not however rule out the usual animal analogies:

Il s'était mis à l'aimer, cette machine en quelque sorte animée, qui palpitait et frémissait sous ses pieds, qu'il nourrissait, qu'il caressait, qu'il entendait souffler et siffler comme un être. L'amour que le chasseur a pour son chien, le jockey pour sa bête, le laboureur pour ses bœufs, Martial l'avait pour cette locomotive dont les flancs brûlaient et dont l'haleine noire lui bistrat la peau.³²

Indeed, Martial comes to love his locomotive so much that he somewhat neglects to direct his considerable masculine energies towards his wife, Lauriane, a circus performer whom he encounters when she literally falls into his arms from the high wire, and who ultimately embarks on a fateful affair with a wealthy *débauché*.³³ Martial, a model of *petit-bourgeois* self-improvement through amateur scientific self-instruction, becomes obsessed with 'cette incessante préoccupation des ingénieurs', the elusive optimisation of steam power. Though fascinated with the whole new world of practical possibilities which steam opens up ('un tunnel qui réunirait l'Angleterre au continent', 'Paris port de mer', and the idea that 'des trains-éclairs vont en trois jours et demi de New-York à San-Francisco'), he senses that technological perfection begins at home:

Il pensait, il donnait volontiers la volée à ses mâles chimères, mais il étudiait patiemment et recherchait avec soin les perfectionnements qu'il voulait apporter à son art. Il recherchait surtout avec l'acharnement viril de ceux qui finissent enfin par trouver, il recherchait le

³² *Le Train* 17, p. 114.

³³ An idea of the ridiculousness of the novel's plot can be gleaned from the circumstances of Lauriane's presence in the 'Cirque Elton' (named after its owner, the 'Yankee' Sir Francis Elton): its star, the 'cockney' aristocrat Kenwell, takes her on, having been reminded by her of a Scottish showgirl who has broken his heart and prompted him to leave for France, later to get her poetically just deserts by falling from a tightrope into the Niagara Falls. Lauriane meets Martial when, as a spectator, he catches her as she falls from the high wire.

meilleur système d'utilisation de la vapeur. Il croyait fermement, il était certain qu'on peut perfectionner la coulisse Stephenson, et qu'on peut aussi arriver à *équilibrer les tiroirs*.³⁴

To this noble end, Martial has constructed a miniature steam engine at home. His delusion lies in the notion that steam engines, which are in fact motors, function like *machines* in the classical sense, where a perfect system results from the balancing of equal and opposite forces exterior to the mechanism itself. However, he appears aware that he is seeking an unattainable ideal:

'Un homme, Giffard, est à jamais célèbre pour avoir inventé le perfectionnement qui porte son nom, ce que nous appelons dans nos machines le *giffard*, l'injecteur Giffard, qui a permis de supprimer les anciennes pompes d'alimentation d'eau, or ce que je cherche c'est bien autre chose que le *giffard*. Au fait, c'est peut-être la quadrature du cercle, la tulipe noire, le dahlia bleu, le merle blanc, l'impossible!'³⁵

Martial, then, is not really concerned with the invention of a device which might have a chance of serving any mundane practical purpose, but with impossible abstractions, and this is reflected in his relationship with Lauriane: he is more interested in attaining an ideal of masculinity than in playing the practical role of a husband. It is unsurprising, therefore, that Lauriane should become disenchanted with married life, and with Martial's experiments:

Équilibrer les tiroirs, quelle déception, en fin de compte, se cachait sous cette phrase qui semblait incompréhensible à Lauriane et qui lui faisait l'effet d'un argot quelconque!³⁶

Martial is simply not living in the real world. However, it is precisely his refusal to accept reality in a practical, everyday sense, which causes a more absolute reality to bring about

³⁴ *Le Train 17*, p. 221, emphasis in original.

³⁵ *Le Train 17*, p. 222. Whatever celebrity Henri Giffard retains lies in his creation in 1852 of the first steam-powered dirigible. See Alexander Hellemans and Bryan Bunch, *The Timetables of Science* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988), p. 323.

³⁶ *Le Train 17*, p. 265.

his ultimate downfall. Precisely because he sees his ideal role as to reflect, as a perfect male, the perfect functioning of his machine, his behaviour ends up being determined by brute male instinct. The machine is, after all, also a beast, and in *Le Train 17*'s eponymous final chapter, perhaps the saving grace of a work whose 'qualités littéraires' are probably rightly described by Noiray as 'minces', Martial's psychological coalescence with the workings of the *Ville de Calais*, alias 'le train 17', reveals him to be an archetype of 'la bête humaine', the logical end-point of an era's complacent preoccupation with technological perfection at the expense of social conscience and interpersonal human contact, whereby human perfectibility is spuriously linked with Progress.³⁷ If men are machines, and machines are animals, then it is to be expected that men will behave according to animal instinct.

The novel's climax comes about some time after Lauriane's lover, the wealthy Armand Obertin, discards her, on the very day when her daughter, 'la petite Marthe', having been allowed to go on an outing by Martial (too busy jealously stalking Armand to look after her), falls into a lake and drowns. Martial has somewhat suppressed his grief by becoming further devoted to his work (although it was precisely this devotion, coupled with the atrophied masculinity accompanying it, which brought about the circumstances of Marthe's death in the first place), but the sight of Armand boarding his train one day sends him, as it were, off the rails. Prior to Armand's arrival, it is business as usual, and all the usual animal parallels, as well as the quasi-military command structure conducive to Martial's normal professional functioning, are already in place, as his fireman, Quentin Arnecke, prepares 'sa chère *Ville de Calais*' for departure:

³⁷ Noiray, *Le Romancier et La Machine*, I, 79. Noiray provides a very succinct plot summary (p. 79, n. 181).

Tout en pensant à Martial pour lequel il était prêt à se faire tuer, comme un bon soldat pour son capitaine, Quentin, vingt minutes avant le départ, selon son habitude, graissait la locomotive, caressait, ainsi qu'un cheval qui va partir, sa *Ville de Calais*.³⁸

At this stage, Martial is behaving according to his professional instinct, looking 'machinalement' at the station clock, and unperturbed by 'tout ce monde qui s'engouffrait, impatient, dans les voitures'. However, his mind is on other matters, preoccupied with 'le blond visage angélique de Marthe'. This does not affect his professional competence until his male instincts are aroused by the coming into earshot of 'le nom de l'être haï, du voleur, de l'infâme'. He is incapable of recognising anyone other than Lauriane in Armand's female travelling companion, even though it is not her. From this point on, Martial runs on instinct alone. It is the only thing which can distract him from his thoughts, and at the same time, it is what will cause him to throw caution to the winds:

Martial était déjà, d'ailleurs, sur sa machine, [...] l'instinct guidant ses mouvements, que ne dirigeait plus cette intelligence grave et forte qui était sa puissance [...]; puis, ouvrant le régulateur, il *démarait* [sic], la *Ville de Calais* soufflant et hennissant avec sa fumée blanche et s'élançant hors de la gare, comme s'il y eût en elle une âme.³⁹

While the machine is now possessed of a 'soul', Martial loses his essential humanity, and the sense of professional responsibility which had previously kept his rage in check. 'Quelque chose d'atroce et d'effrayant soufflait dans cette tête éperdue', and, hell-bent on revenge, 'il laissait aller, comme une éperdue, la *Ville de Calais*. Il ne songeait plus à rien, ni à la pression, ni aux signaux, ni à la marche précipitée'.⁴⁰ The result of this is that the train itself goes out of control, becoming ever more 'animal':

Le train 17 courait, affolé, comme dans un songe. L'énorme machine semblait animée; elle vivait, soufflait, reniflait, hurlait, suait comme un cheval emporté. De grosses gouttes d'eau

³⁸ *Le Train 17*, p. 440.

³⁹ *Le Train 17*, pp. 446-47.

⁴⁰ *Le Train 17*, p. 449.

roulaient sur sa carapace de fer; le bruit assourdissant des roues semblait le galop effréné d'un animal gigantesque.⁴¹

The effect of this on the passengers, as if caught up in a battlefield under 'l'épouvantable bruit de mitraille que produisent les carreaux agités, les voitures secouées', is that they become a 'convoi de condamnés emporté par un démon'.⁴² There is no doubt that this demon is Martial, who 'n'appartenait plus qu'à sa vengeance; il s'abandonnait, avec une volupté infernale, à cette joie farouche de punir'. As for bystanders, 'Le train 17 est *fou*!' – a designation which the narrator remarks on as 'le terme saisissant et sinistre'.⁴³ That is, what appears to be of greatest concern is that matters have reached a point where the machine can be described in human terms, the converse implication of which is that the driver has lost all humanity. In the event, the train does finally stop, and the passengers, including the terrified Armand, are spared, but not before Martial, leaving final orders to his deputy, commits suicide by throwing himself under the train.

Le Train 17 may be a minor work which wears its heart rather awkwardly on its sleeve, but naturalist fiction, however unjustifiably, is not known for its subtlety. The wider plot of Claretie's novel may be rather risible, but in the specific area of 'man as machine as beast', it displays quite a lot of imagination and exploits considerable technical detail (often quoting directly from the rules and regulations of the Chemin de fer du Nord), and more importantly, displays a sensitivity to some major preoccupations and anxieties of the late nineteenth century. It might be asked at this stage, however, why was so much anxiety afoot at this time about the uneasy relationship between man, beast and machine? Earlier the specifically sexual anxiety about women, nature and machines was raised. Indeed, such

⁴¹ *Le Train 17*, p. 450.

⁴² *Le Train 17*, p. 452.

⁴³ *Le Train 17*, p. 453.

‘otherness’ presented a threat to nineteenth-century masculinity. But as we have also seen, as in *Le Train 17*, machines can cause anxieties without necessarily being female: one might even say, for example, that Martial’s relationship with his locomotive is a rather homoerotic one (and therein no less a threat to traditional masculinity, in that it is still part of the ‘rivalité entre la femme et la machine’ which Noiray regards as a ‘thème fondamental dans l’expression littéraire de l’objet technique’)⁴⁴. Perhaps there is a more important reason connected with the history of science, and the way in which new knowledge about animals, and shockingly, about humans also, became incorporated into the social discourse of late nineteenth-century France. Part of the problem lies in the pervasive hangover of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century ways of perceiving Man and Nature, themselves still relatively world-altering, in an age where new discoveries in the life sciences and thermodynamics were turning many firmly held beliefs on their head. As we saw in Chapter One, there was a tendency in the nineteenth century to understand technological developments in terms of their Classical and Enlightenment precedents. This was no greater the case, as Michel Serres holds, than in the area of the motive properties of fire, where the functioning of thermodynamic motors was mistakenly apprehended through the prism of classical mechanics and particle dynamics. This, however, is intimately connected with the nineteenth century’s confident view of itself as an era when all circles would finally be squared, and importantly also with the breakdown of biological categories. According to Muriel Louâpre, humanity has traditionally defined itself in terms of a binary opposition to animality. Man’s ‘hiérarchie du vivant’ has been based on a series of dichotomies between intelligence and instinct, culture and nature. Furthermore:

⁴⁴ Noiray, *Le Romancier et La Machine*, I, 83.

[L]e modèle selon lequel l'homme se pense, en particulier depuis le XVII^e siècle est celui de la Machine, organisation rationnelle, maîtrisée relevant du pôle auquel on s'efforce d'identifier l'humanité. Cette construction par laquelle l'homme moderne s'est défini un Autre et un modèle se trouve menacée par les travaux des sciences du vivant, au XVIII^e siècle, mais surtout avec le Darwinisme au XIX^e siècle: il crée une tension entre le modèle intellectuel choisi et le modèle naturel désormais inévitable [...].⁴⁵

If this tension is to be resolved, it is by a synthesis of the two models, the logical conclusion of which is that the machine, in the Cartesian model paralleling man, is now governed by the animal instinct which the Darwinian one attributes to humanity through its calling into question of the distinction between man and his animal ancestors, itself consistent with the Cartesian dichotomy between soul and body. Hence the anxiety about machines evident in some of the texts thus far examined. How, then, does animal instinct manifest itself in machines? Significantly, just as discoveries about heredity displace the Cartesian understanding of humanity, discoveries about the motive properties of heat displace the Cartesian understanding of machines. The archetypal machines of the nineteenth century, in fact, are no longer properly machines but thermodynamic motors, and are subject to entropy, which might be regarded as an instinctive tendency towards rest, that is, one which is rationally determined by nature. And just as there is an uneasiness about the blurring of the distinction between man and animal, there is a similar reluctance or inability to understand the new machines in their own terms, rather than in the terms of the simple machine, a balancing act which, if really applicable to steam engines (which it is not), would allow for perpetual motion. Similarly, if Nature has replaced God as the prime motor of human action, then for a mindset supposedly free of the shackles of obscurantism but still looking for something to blame, Original Sin is easily replaced, by notions of atavistic instinct provided by Lombrosian criminal psychology. In short, scientific

⁴⁵ Muriel Louâpre, 'La Bête et la Machine', in *Itinéraires du XIX^e siècle. Textes réunis par Paul Perron, Roland Le Huenen, Stéphane Michon en hommage à Joseph Sablé* (Toronto: Centre d'Études Romantiques Joseph Sablé, 1996), pp. 257-87 (p. 257).

discoveries of the nineteenth century are so rational as to appear to demolish reason in its previously understood sense. As Louâpre comments, 'au moment où l'homme renonce à sa propre rationalité, [la machine] se dresse face à lui avec la même absolue nécessité que celle que l'on attribue à l'instinct animal'.⁴⁶ The result is that a new duality emerges, so that it is as if there are two 'reasons', one absolute but accepted only with reluctant unease, one rooted in a previous era but still culturally pervasive.

Sensitivity to this duality is a necessary precondition, then, for any attempt to do justice to the intersecting concerns outlined above. The texts already discussed may address some of them individually, and may be rich in technical detail, or present the occasional knowing wink to hereditary taxonomy, but because these are not integrated into a totalising vision, the tension and anxiety produced by their very interrelatedness are left unresolved, so the works in question remain (in this particular context) rather one-dimensional, opting either for optimism, or more usually plumping for pessimism. In this latter respect already, such works, though arguably within what might be termed the naturalist canon, are at quite a remove from its best-known yet paradoxically most generically transcendent member, *Les Rougon-Macquart*. Consider for example *Germinal*, where morbid pessimism about the conditions of industrial workers and the unrelenting grinding of machines is subtended by a regenerative optimism. But more importantly, if Zola's novels are able to transcend the apparently mutually opposed forces of the modern age, they do so within a ready-made cyclical structure and organisational theme, which allows for seemingly disparate issues to become systematised into a coherent whole. So if Zola were to write a novel about the judicial, psychological and interpersonal consequences of a murder on a train involving an engine-driver plucked from (albeit just having been added to) the branches of a family tree rooted in speculative hereditary determinism, it would hardly be likely that any of the

⁴⁶ Louâpre, 'La Bête et la Machine', p. 263.

various strands should be dealt with in isolation.⁴⁷ This much is already suggested by the first ‘plan définitif’:

[en marge:] à chaque chapitre consulter les notes Livre de L.

Sans description, sans art visible, d’une plume courante. -Cauchemar à toute la France.

Une pointe de mystère, l’au-delà, une force inconnue – dans la réalité.

Hérédité du crime chez Jacques. Étude sur la magistrature avec le Denizet – grand poème des chemins de fer, avec la voie ferrée. (3 buts.)

Drame mystérieux et terrifiant sous le grand transit moderne.⁴⁸

Apart from the planned melding of the ‘3 buts’ into a ‘drame [...] sous le grand transit moderne’ (already a much more ambitious enterprise than the likes of *Le Train 17*, and much more than simply a plan for a story, such as that of the Vatar sisters, set against the background of the railway), what is perhaps of significance here is the positing of a dual perspective. That is, the novel is to deal with the unknown and unquantifiable, but in the context of reality. Or indeed conversely, what appears in the narrative as being unknowable and unquantifiable may in fact be attributable to natural causes anchored in reality. In *La Bête humaine*, as the planned novel would become, ‘reality’ in at least one respect is assured by detailed information about the functioning of the railway network and of the locomotives running on it, gleaned principally from study of the ‘Livre de L.’, that is, of Pol Lefèvre, a former railway employee, with whom Zola also corresponded.⁴⁹ However, this does not take away from the impressionistic quality of the ‘poème’, nor imply that the entirety of such ‘reality’ is given expression. Noiray judiciously points out that, while Zola’s research was exhaustive (as is evident from the *dossier préparatoire*), ‘dans le

⁴⁷ In the *Ébauche* to the novel, the engine-driver begins as Étienne, but eventually becomes Jacques, presumably for reasons of plausibility.

⁴⁸ Bibliothèque Nationale, Nouvelles acquisitions françaises, 10274, *Dossier for La Bête humaine* (incorporating ‘Notes Lefèvre’, ‘Mes Notes’), f° 290.

⁴⁹ P. Lefèvre, G. Cerbelaud, *Les Chemins de fer des origines à 1890* [1890] (Paris: Europe Éditions, 1969). Both authors had a sound technological background, Lefèvre, according to the title page, an ‘ancien élève de l’École polytechnique’, Cerbelaud ‘Professeur à l’Association polytechnique’.

roman au contraire l'usage de la technicité se fait beaucoup plus mesuré'.⁵⁰ What this, among other factors to be discussed, suggests is that the novel's author is far more abreast of technological detail than is its narrator. This again points to a dual structure, or perhaps even a multiplicity of dual structures, in play in the novel. One reality is subject to a limited perspective, whereas there is a more absolute and knowing reality governing affairs.

This is perhaps what Jules Lemaitre, writing in *Le Figaro* of 8 March 1890, understood in characterising *La Bête humaine* as 'une épopée préhistorique sous la forme d'une histoire d'aujourd'hui'.⁵¹ This is a familiar theme taken up by many commentators since, notably by Gilles Deleuze, who formulates a complex series of oppositions based primarily on the distinction between epic and drama.⁵² Certainly, on a very general level, Zola's novel can be seen to be making some sort of 'epic' statement about the fundamental nature of human beings and the movement of humanity towards some unseen destination, using the 'dramatic' terms of reference of the everyday workings of a railway milieu and the actions of the people who inhabit it. However, any overall 'message' which the novel may eventually communicate comes about through a highly complex and problematic system of symbols and metaphors which are informed in no small measure by two of the major scientific developments of the nineteenth century, namely genetics and thermodynamics. Like the rest of the *Rougon-Macquart* cycle, *La Bête humaine* employs a genealogical system, later explicitly formulated in *Le Docteur Pascal*, whereby certain behavioural characteristics are inherited and are crucial to narrative and characterisation. Where the novel differs from the rest of the cycle, I wish to argue here, is in the presence of

⁵⁰ Noiray, *Le Romancier et La Machine*, I, 176.

⁵¹ Jules Lemaitre, *Le Figaro*, 8 March 1890, quoted in Philippe Hamon, *La Bête humaine d'Émile Zola* (Paris: Gallimard, série Foliothèque, 1994), p. 168.

⁵² Gilles Deleuze, 'Zola et la fêlure', in *Logique du Sens* (Paris: Minuit, 1969), repr. in Émile Zola, *La Bête humaine* (Paris: Gallimard, édition Folio, 1977), pp. 7-24.

the laws of thermodynamics as an implicit symbolic structure, operating in tandem with the hereditary structure, in terms of which human behaviour can be interpreted. Such a juxtaposition is immediately problematic. Both 'theories' propose what might be termed 'processes of transformation' as explanations for phenomena. According to Gillian Beer, however, this shared emphasis diverged when it came to the question of order. 'Evolutionary theory appeared to propose a more and more complex ordering, while the second law of thermodynamics emphasises the tendency of energy systems towards disorder'.⁵³

Deleuze argues that there is a double heredity at work in the novel, which mirrors the distinction between *drama* and *epos*. There are the relatively simple, mundane, profane behavioural characteristics such as alcoholism and sexual perversity which are to an extent dependent on socio-historical conditions and are not always transmitted intact from one generation to the next. This is termed 'la petite hérédité', which can be altered, or intensified in certain cases, by the individual's immediate living environment, and which is essentially part of *soma*, or that part of an organism which plays no role in the transmission of genetic 'stock'. What is transmitted without exception, Deleuze holds, and without which the development of the everyday instincts and vices could not occur, is 'la fêlure', or, in other words, 'la grande hérédité', manifested in *soma*'s counterpart, *germen*, which only transmits itself, and which is concealed under any instinct to which an individual might be susceptible:

Tout repose sur le paradoxe de cette hérédité confondue avec son véhicule ou son moyen, de ce transmis confondu avec sa transmission, ou de cette transmission qui ne transmet autre chose qu'elle-même.⁵⁴

⁵³ Gillian Beer, *Darwin's Plots* (London: Routledge, 1983), p. 16.

⁵⁴ Deleuze, 'Zola et la fêlure', p. 8.

However, an important point is that the individual is usually unaware of the *fêlure*, mistaking it for the common or garden instinct with which it is linked, and indeed often suppressing recognition of it. What the *fêlure* in fact is, according to Deleuze, is the Death Instinct, 'l'instinct de la mort, *qui n'est pas un instinct parmi les autres*, mais la *fêlure en personne*, autour de laquelle tous les instincts fourmillent'.⁵⁵ And in *La Bête humaine*, it is particularly marked in the character of Jacques Lantier. However, Jacques's progression towards destruction is paralleled in that of his locomotive, la Lison. As Peter Brooks remarks:

[L]a *fêlure* héréditaire de Jacques Lantier, à travers laquelle s'échappe son moi dans un brouillard de vapeur, souligne sa ressemblance foncière avec la locomotive qu'il conduit. En effet, il y a [...] un continuel échange métaphorique entre Lantier et 'La Lison' [...]. Les pulsions érotiques et agressives des êtres humains s'investissent dans la machine, qui les représente et, plus encore, les réalise, dévoilant ainsi la dynamique du récit, sa force motrice.⁵⁶

It is indeed in this respect that the theories of thermodynamics are of especial significance, particularly in terms of a reluctance or inability to recognise the presence of the Death Instinct as Deleuze understands it. Now the laws of thermodynamics, as initially mooted by Sadi Carnot, but later formulated and popularised by William Thompson (Lord Kelvin), might be summarised briefly as follows: the First Law states that whenever work (in the case of steam locomotives, the energy produced in order for movement to occur) is produced by heat, a quantity of heat energy is consumed which is proportional to the amount of work done; the Second Law states that in a closed system with constant energy transfer, entropy will always increase, causing the system to degrade towards equilibrium.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Deleuze, 'Zola et la *fêlure*', p. 14. The emphasis is Deleuze's.

⁵⁶ Peter Brooks, 'Machines et moteurs du récit', *Romantisme*, 46 (1984), 97-104 (p. 100).

⁵⁷ See *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 15th edn (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1990), Vol XI, 702.

The obvious thermodynamic equivalent of the Death Instinct is the tendency towards equilibrium, a tendency quantifiable in terms of entropy, which is a value dependent on the amount of heat energy being transferred in a given system. The tendency to equilibrium causes a running down, a system's reversion to its original state, in the absence of any change in the amount of energy being transferred. In an irreversible transformational process such as the combustion of fuel, entropy will always increase as long as the amount of energy being converted into work remains the same, that is, as long as the system remains closed, with no outside interference. Of course, the equilibrium mentioned here is thermodynamic equilibrium, rather than the simple equilibrium of simple machines. This is a distinction crucial to the technological changes that came about in the nineteenth century, not least because, as Michel Serres outlines, the optimism of the times conspired in a visualisation of the new technology in the terms of reference of the old.⁵⁸ That is, the motor was seen in terms of the simple machine, the production of energy and movement was seen in terms of the balancing of equal and opposite forces. Once heat had been introduced into the equation with the scientifically misnamed 'pompes à feu' and their more complicated descendants, movement could no longer be considered in terms of simple mechanical cause and effect (as, neither, could heredity). From Carnot onwards, systems were organic. Movement was no longer only horizontal and linear, but also circular and cyclical. By continuing to consider the new forms of movement in terms of the limited vision of the pre-thermodynamic age, however, the naïveté of the nineteenth century perpetuated the myth of perpetual motion, which under such a delusion could be categorised as 'equilibrium'. According to Serres, the nineteenth-century dream was not to have to submit simultaneously to both laws of thermodynamics, the fundamental conditions

⁵⁸ Michel Serres, *Feux et signaux de brume. Zola* (Paris: Grasset et Fasquelle, 1975), Chap. II, 'Moteur et Circulation', esp. pp. 59-64.

of the operation of which are constancy and degradation: 'Le rêve ici est moins celui d'une machine idéale, à rendement égal à un, que de cette machine impossible, absurde au sens technique, dont le jeu de tous les organes aboutirait à s'entretenir elle-même'.⁵⁹ Only by suppression of the Second Law, that of degradation, which parallels the Death Instinct, is perpetual motion possible.⁶⁰ In this way it is made imaginable by the imagined suppression or self-deluding deferral of a system's or organism's tendency towards its original state, making possible what Serres refers to as 'L'auto-alimentation de l'auto-moteur.

Quelle vie normale: ce serait la santé, ce serait le bonheur, ce serait la norme, et voilà, c'est l'absurdité, ce que les physiciens nommeraient le miracle. Le normal vivant est l'anormal physique: la croix de cette fin de siècle. Le naturalisme, en tant que physicalisme de la génétique, doit passer par ce carrefour théorique.⁶¹

How then, once it is accepted that a system will not function simply, but degenerate, is its degradation to be deferred? The laws of thermodynamics apply to *closed* systems, that is, those to which no exterior source of energy change is available. It is by opening such systems to exterior energy that they may be provided with a simulacrum of perpetual motion, that they may be seen to behave as *machines* in the classical sense, where work matches expended effort, rather than the equilibrium-seeking and energy-dissipating motors, or *locomotives*, which they are in reality. The dissipation of energy leading to equilibrium must be compensated for externally, and there must be some conduit, crack, or *fêlure* through which this might be achieved, through which a potential difference between heat and cold might be created, thus allowing continued functioning and preventing thermal death. According to Serres:

⁵⁹ Serres, *Feux et signaux de brume*, p. 63.

⁶⁰ In fact, although the laws of thermodynamics were not formulated until the nineteenth century, the impossibility of perpetual motion had been intuitively realised as early as 1775, when the Académie des Sciences stopped accepting theses on the subject. See *Encyclopédie de la Pléiade. Histoire de la Science*, ed. Maurice Daumas (Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1957), p. 901.

⁶¹ Serres, *Feux et signaux de brume*, p. 63.

Le fonctionnement normal du moteur demande une différence, un déséquilibre. Dès lors, on peut rêver d'échapper à la mort, par exemple, en ouvrant un peu le système clos, en pratiquant, sur ses parois, une fêlure.⁶²

This would seem to differ from Deleuze's understanding of the term *fêlure*. It would seem that the property which, according to Serres, facilitates avoidance of the dominance of the Death Instinct is what Deleuze holds to be that very Death Instinct itself. It might be, however, that this apparent contradiction is entirely consistent with the paradox at the heart of Zola's novel, to which attention shall now be turned. This paradox presents itself in terms explicitly genetic, implicitly thermodynamic, at the first mention of Jacques Lantier's *fêlure*:

La famille n'était guère d'aplomb, beaucoup avaient une fêlure. Lui, à certaines heures, la sentait bien, cette fêlure héréditaire; non pas qu'il fut d'une santé mauvaise, car l'appréhension et la honte de ses crises l'avaient seules maigri autrefois; mais c'étaient, dans son être, de subites pertes d'équilibre, comme des cassures, des trous par lesquels son moi lui échappait, au milieu d'une sorte de grande fumée qui déformait tout.⁶³

It is indeed the case here that it is the *fêlure* which causes loss of equilibrium, but this would seem perhaps to have something to do with an apparent misunderstanding by Zola, or at least by Zola's narrator, of equilibrium in its proper thermodynamic sense. Here, equilibrium seems to be equivalent to normal behaviour. Or else, perhaps, the term is being used in its 'lay' sense for a reason which will become clearer later in the novel. Perhaps, in terms of the *drama*, in terms of 'la petite hérédité' according to which equal doses of 'tare' are weighed up on a simple balance and handed out to everyone in turn, equilibrium is taken to mean the constant, repetitive, unproblematic functioning of a system or organism, in the same way that a motor is assumed to function like a simple, that is, pre-thermodynamic, machine. Equilibrium as the original state of rest to which all organisms

⁶² Serres, *Feux et signaux de brume*, p. 63.

⁶³ Émile Zola, *La Bête humaine* (1890), in *Les Rougon-Macquart. Histoire naturelle et sociale d'une famille sous le Second Empire*, ed. Henri Mitterand, 5 Vols (Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1960-67), IV (1966), 995-1331 (p. 1043). This edition and hereinafter referred to by volume and page number.

return would seem then to be part of the *epos*. It would be strange indeed that Zola, whose awareness of the scientific theories of the age is on display throughout his fictional and 'theoretical' work, and whose words are to be understood on several levels, should use scientific terms in an incorrect or unscientific way without a specific reason, especially when one considers that thermodynamics was a relatively advanced field of enquiry from the mid-nineteenth century onwards (the term itself having been coined by Kelvin in 1849), fundamentally similar to its modern-day equivalent, whereas many of the ideas put forward by nineteenth-century genetics are, by today's standards, fanciful. Added to this the withholding of considerably more technical detail than appears in the novel (as raised by Noiray), it could in fact be argued that narratorially, occasional irony notwithstanding, *La Bête humaine* is subject to the limited vision of nineteenth-century optimism, whereas, on the grander textual scale, there is manifested (on the part of the implied author, it might be said) an acute understanding of this optimism, of how certain aspects of it are misplaced, and of the full significance of new technological discoveries.⁶⁴ As Serres would have it: 'Le naturalisme, contrairement à ce que disent les ignorants, est exactement à l'heure de sa science.'⁶⁵ According to such a proposition, which ultimately lends itself to a thoroughgoing scientific approach rather than to the 'deplorable looseness' which Tony Tanner claims plagues much use of the terminology of the laws of thermodynamics in literary criticism, there exists a level of implied authorial awareness and understanding of technology at least sufficient to provide textual grounds for analogy with scientific terms used in their correct meaning.⁶⁶ Zola's narrator, on the other hand, is necessarily complicit

⁶⁴ I use here the terms 'narrative' and 'text', and their derivatives, in a sense roughly analogous to that of the Genettian categories of 'narration' and 'récit'. See Gérard Genette, *Figures III* (Paris: Seuil, 1972), pp. 71-72.

⁶⁵ Serres, *Feux et signaux de brume*, p. 78.

⁶⁶ Tony Tanner, *City of Words. American Fiction 1950-1970* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1971), p. 141. See especially Chapter 6, 'Everything running down'.

with the vision of the age, a vision focalised through his protagonists in their inability to see the *fêlure* lurking underneath their instinctual behaviour, or at least to understand fully what it signifies in relation to equilibrium.

This lack of complete understanding, or rather self-imposed unwillingness to understand what he often feels, is what afflicts Jacques. Although of all the characters he has the strongest sense of the *fêlure*, he is most prone to a reluctance to try to understand it. This reluctance is reflected in his relationship with his locomotive, or rather, significantly, his *machine*, la Lison, which is in turn paralleled by his relationship with his mistress, Séverine. What he values most about la Lison are her obedience and her ‘marche régulière et continue’ (IV, 1128), that is, what would seem to be her ‘equilibrium’ in the non-thermodynamic understanding of the term. Jacques not only humanises la Lison, he feminises her and enjoys a personal relationship with her, to the extent that he tolerates what he perceives as a vice, ‘une faim continue, une vraie débauche’, ‘un trop grand besoin de graissage’ (IV, 1128). This ‘graissage’ usually takes place when the locomotive is stationary; in the novel the exception occurs when the locomotive breaks down in the snow; at this point, Jacques takes the unusual and dangerous step of leaving the footplate to administer the grease to the cylinders while the train is moving (with difficulty; IV, 1164). Now, what Jacques is doing, thermodynamically, in administering the grease, is counteracting the locomotive’s tendency towards Equilibrium. The closed system of the steam engine fired by a constant supply of fuel will run down unless the necessary dissipation of energy (due to the thermodynamic cycle, which constitutes work produced in addition to the mere movement of the locomotive) is somehow compensated for. Through the introduction of grease (for, presumably, lubrication, the reduction of friction, and seemingly, and importantly, for the blocking of a gap) the cycle will expend less energy, thus enhancing movement, thus creating the impression that the work produced in

movement is commensurate with the amount of energy supplied. What Jacques is actually doing, even if he appears to be blocking a gap, is interfering with the closed system: he is making it into an open system. He is 'cracking' it, introducing a '*fêlure*', so that the working of the Second Law of thermodynamics may be disrupted, so that Equilibrium (the capital denotes the thermodynamic, epic meaning) may be deferred, so that perpetual motion seems a reality. And he passes it off, to himself and to his stoker, Pecqueux, as the indulgence of a minor instinct which is subsidiary to the essential nature of the functioning of his 'machine':⁶⁷

Il s'était résigné à lui tolérer cette passion gloutonne, de même qu'on ferme les yeux sur un vice, chez les personnes qui sont, d'autre part, pécunies de qualités; et il se contentait de dire, avec son chauffeur, en manière de plaisanterie, qu'elle avait, à l'exemple des belles femmes, le besoin d'être graissée trop souvent.

(IV, 1128-29)

Again there would seem to be a contradiction of Deleuze's scheme of things. The *fêlure* which is introduced staves off the Death instinct. And the locomotive's prime instinct is indeed towards death; its apparent instinct for constant movement manifested in its hunger for lubrication is a social, not a natural, one, introduced by interaction with an exterior agent: it is only a symptom of its innate and defining tendency, decreed by the natural sciences, towards Equilibrium. However, the *fêlure* can only defer Equilibrium, it cannot eliminate it. And what is more, once it is opened, it can only increase in size. The more the hunger is indulged, the more disordered the system becomes. The more Jacques's habitual dosage of grease increases, the more the tendency towards Equilibrium makes

⁶⁷ The ratio of frequency of the word 'machine' to the word 'locomotive' in *La Bête humaine* is 138 to 2. This statistic, along with the observation by Lefèvre that railwaymen preferred the former, scientifically inaccurate and simplistic, term, to the latter, is documented in Geoff Woollen, 'Zola: La machine en tous ses effets', *Romantisme*, 41 (1983), 115-24 (p. 118). One of Woollen's main points is that in Zola the *machine*, designated as such, is often capable of much more than is realistically possible.

itself felt, albeit appearing to Jacques as the mundane desire on the part of the humanised Lison, shared by Jacques, for the mundane equilibrium of regular and rapid movement. As Deleuze states, 'la fêlure n'est comblée qu'en apparence'.⁶⁸ On the whole, therefore, it is not too outlandish or contradictory to suggest that the inevitably paradoxical *fêlure* should be the means of deferral of Equilibrium, and the thermodynamic Death Instinct itself, at one and the same time. This paradoxical principle is made clear by the functioning of la Lison, which is governed entirely by the Death Instinct: in 'natural', thermodynamic, terms (as a closed system) by the operation of the Second Law, and in 'social' terms (as an opened system) by interaction with Jacques's inherited death wish and burgeoning lack of self-control concealed by apparent self-control itself, manifested on the footplate by his stubborn concern for constant speed which will ultimately prove to be his and la Lison's undoing:

Il était tout au souci de garder sa vitesse, sachant bien que la vraie qualité d'un mécanicien, après la tempérance et l'amour de sa machine, consistait à marcher d'une façon régulière, sans secousse, à la plus haute pression possible. Même, son unique défaut était la, dans un entêtement à ne pas s'arrêter, désobéissant aux signaux, croyant toujours qu'il aurait le temps de dompter la Lison.

(IV, 1162)

The question remains as to what precisely the 'équilibre' which Jacques occasionally loses, on account of his *fêlure*, actually is. Are *fêlure* and *équilibre* two seemingly opposing entities leading paradoxically to the same end, namely *Équilibre*? An answer might well be found in some of the writings of Freud, for whom, says Brooks, 'vivre c'est obéir à la puissance motrice de ce moteur mis en marche par la tension de l'écart, alimenté par le combustible du pulsionnel, qui va de l'avant jusqu'à ce qu'on rencontre – ainsi que le veut la seconde loi de la thermodynamique – l'entropie'.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Deleuze, 'Zola et la fêlure', p. 23.

⁶⁹ Brooks, 'Machines et moteurs du récit', p. 102.

According to Freud, instinct is bound up with the compulsion to repetition. The thermodynamic cycle, particularly as depicted in *La Bête humaine*, provides an ideal example of such a compulsion being merely an expression of the tendency towards an original state of rest, but as in the novel, this conception of compulsion applies to all organic life, for which thermodynamic systems can only provide a roughly analogous model. According to such a conception, ‘*an instinct is an urge inherent in organic life to restore an earlier state of things* which the living entity has been obliged to abandon under the pressure of external disturbing forces; that is, it is a kind of organic elasticity, or, to put it another way, the expression of the inertia inherent in organic life’.⁷⁰ Jacques’s ‘*petit équilibre*’, to paraphrase Deleuze, governed by the ‘*petite hérédité*’ of everyday instinct, would thus merely be the simple manifestation of the Death Instinct, the tendency towards the ‘*grand équilibre*’ expressed in another form, ‘the expression of the inertia inherent in organic life’, and at the same time the means of deferral of death. His *fêlure* would seem to be the ‘short circuit’ which would allow him to fulfil his ‘life-goal’ (i.e. death) sooner, and which, says Freud, it was commonly assumed all living beings strove to avoid. Such an assumption failed to take into account the sexual instincts, which are unusually resistant to external influences. Although these are life instincts, in that they propagate life and are indeed the most vital of the instincts, they can become fused with the death instincts ‘regularly and very extensively’. It is when they become suddenly defused, fragmented, however, that the Death Instinct is most marked, particularly as a result of obsessional neuroses.⁷¹ In *La Bête humaine* it is via the *fêlure* that such a fusion, and its attendant violent defusion, take place. It is because the *fêlure* facilitates, in both la Lison and Jacques,

⁷⁰ Sigmund Freud, ‘Beyond the Pleasure Principle’ (1920), in *The Freud Reader*, ed. by Peter Gay (London: Vintage, 1995), pp. 594-626 (p. 612). The emphasis is Freud’s.

⁷¹ Sigmund Freud, ‘The Ego and the Id’ (1923), in *The Freud Reader*, pp. 629-58 (p. 646).

such an intense coextensivity of the life instinct, the instinct toward movement, with the instinct towards Equilibrium (that is, in Jacques's case, of his libido with his death wish), that they become separated in such a violent manner.

Early in the novel, Jacques resists such a fusion. Paying a visit to a family of level-crossing keepers, to whom he is related through la tante Phasie, a cousin of his father's, in circumstances brought about, ominously, by the fracture of one of la Lison's connecting rods, and which will allow him to witness Roubaud's murder of Grandmorin in a passing train, he becomes caught in a moment of sexual tension with his country cousin, Flore. He does not allow himself to become aroused by her advances because he is in some way aware of their inevitable consequences should he do so. In the paragraph prior to the one in which the reader is informed of Jacques's 'pertes d'équilibre' and of his awareness, albeit limited, of his *fêlure* (through which his *moi*, his ego, escapes, thus leaving his id in the dominant position) the coalescence of the sexual urge with the urge to death is hinted at for the first time:

Voilà qu'il avait voulu la tuer, cette fille! Tuer une femme, tuer une femme! cela sonnait à ses oreilles, du fond de sa jeunesse, avec la fièvre grandissante, affolante du désir. Comme les autres, sous l'éveil de la puberté, rêvent d'en posséder une, lui s'était enragé à l'idée d'en tuer une.

(IV, 1042)

Here as elsewhere, Jacques remains confused. However, at this stage (as yet prior to witnessing the murder) there seems to be a willingness on his part to try to understand his problematic compulsion. This becomes progressively less the case; in his relationships with Séverine and with la Lison, he goes out of his way to avoid giving rational consideration to his obsession. Once he becomes involved with Séverine, he mistakenly believes this problem to have been solved, he mistakenly perceives his Death Instinct to have been

replaced by the sexual urge, in the same way that he believes the locomotive to be capable of functioning like a simple machine, so that the tendency to death appears to him as a mere desire for enhanced movement, which can be suppressed by the addition of grease. Not only is his own Death Instinct masked in this way; so too is the presence of Death in Séverine. Like the locomotive, she has a hidden secret, and it is Death (on the narrative level, the death of Grandmorin; on the level of the *récit*, and unbeknownst to her, the inevitability of her own death). Like la Lison's secret, it manifests itself as a desire on her part to be 'maintained' with affection; as with la Lison's secret, Jacques is aware of it but attempts to suppress his awareness. Like la Lison, Séverine gives away her secret through her 'vaporisation'; from her 'reins', through the outlet of her respiratory system, she dissipates energy, for the loss of which Jacques compensates with the 'graissage' of his affection:

Posséder, tuer, cela s'équivalait-il, dans le fond sombre de la bête humaine? Il ne raisonnait pas, trop ignorant, n'essayait pas d'entr'ouvrir la porte d'épouvante. [...] Lorsqu'elle le serrait d'une étreinte, il sentait bien qu'elle était gonflée et haletante de son secret, qu'elle ne voulait ainsi entrer en lui que pour se soulager de la chose dont elle étouffait. C'était un grand frisson qui lui partait des reins, qui soulevait sa gorge d'amoureuse, dans le flot confus de soupirs montant à ses lèvres. [...] Mais, vite, d'un baiser, il fermait sa bouche, y scellait l'aveu, saisi d'une inquiétude.

(IV, 1155)

Opening and closure are key motifs here, and are especially important because of their confusion. Closure in one sense, the attempt to 'combler la fêlure', as it were, only causes the crack to widen, only causes gas to become bottled up within the flanks of the machine, ready to burst out in violent fashion. Also, the delusion that a closed system (destination: death) will function as an opened one (apparent destination: perpetual life), not subject to the laws of thermodynamics, is being indulged here, as elsewhere. Jacques may well believe he is filling a crack by supplying Lison with grease; he is in fact enlarging one, and refuses to contemplate it rationally, particularly in moments of crisis such as the breakdown

in the snow: 'Sans doute qu'elle dépensait trop de graisse. Et puis, après? On la graissait, voilà tout!' (IV, 1164). Similarly, by sealing Séverine's lips, he is deferring her confession and thus ensuring that its effects will be more devastating later than if made straight away. When Séverine does finally 'open up', the identification of sex and death is unequivocal: 'Ils se possédèrent, retrouvant l'amour au fond de la mort, dans la même volupté douloureuse des bêtes qui s'éventrent pendant le rut' (IV, 1205). Reason, or attempts at it, no longer enter into the matter. Death, no longer masquerading as a desire for affectionate domination on the part of Séverine (as on the part of la Lison), has passed completely into Jacques, now that death has suddenly become unfixed from sex as far as Séverine is concerned. The tendency towards Equilibrium in the epic sense has now overtaken the control mechanism allowing maintenance of a 'romantic' equilibrium. From now on the movement of Jacques and of la Lison is as one. The breakdown in the snow is a critical moment in this regard: rarely before has he had to apply grease to la Lison while in motion, and thereafter, 'she' is never the same, as is later rationalised in terms of her having lost part of her 'soul':

[S]a machine, depuis l'arrêt dans la neige, n'était plus la bien portante, la vaillante d'autrefois. Sans doute, dans la réparation des pistons et des tiroirs, elle avait perdu de son âme, ce mystérieux équilibre de vie, dû au hasard du montage. [...] [I]l en devenait plus sombre, convaincu que la Lison était très malade [...]. Sa tendresse s'en décourageait: à quoi bon aimer, puisqu'il tuerait tout ce qu'il aimerait?

(IV, 1227-28)

He too, subsequent to Séverine's confession, becomes ever more unbalanced. But this apparent loss of control is perhaps just nature taking its course, since the 'équilibre' in both cases is imaginary, based on self-delusion. According to Louâpre, 'dans la problématique zolienne c'est l'instinct qui commande [...], selon une nécessité aveugle qui n'est plus le

débordement incontrôlé de l'instinct mais une nécessité précise, concertée, mécanique'.⁷²

Just as the locomotive's 'illness' is ultimately one deriving from entropy, man's natural state is one of animal instinct, or as Taine would have it, 'l'homme est fou, comme le corps est malade, par nature'.⁷³

The henceforth parallel movement of Jacques and la Lison, then, embodies the Death Instinct, and when the locomotive crashes at the Croix-de-Maufras, there is a certain inevitability, intensified by the *analepsis* inserted at the moment of impact, which renders Flore's agency in blocking the line almost incidental (although highly charged with symbolism, given that it results from sexual jealousy, catalysed by a death). Furthermore, it is made clear that Flore's obstacle is not the sole cause of the crash, and indeed that it could have been avoided had la Lison behaved as her old obedient self. The key ingredients of Zola's symbolism are all present at this point: anthropomorphism, feminisation, sexualisation, bestialisation, respiration, repetition, compulsion:

[L]a Lison n'obéissait pas, allait quand même, à peine ralentie. Elle n'était plus la docile d'autrefois, depuis qu'elle avait perdu dans la neige sa bonne vaporisation, son démarrage si aisé, devenue quinteuse et revêche maintenant, en femme vieillie, dont un coup de froid a détruit la poitrine. Elle soufflait, se cabrait sous le frein, allait, allait toujours, dans l'entêtement alourdi de sa masse.

(IV, 1259-60)

Again, a closure (of the train's path) has resulted in an opening, this time a fatal letting-off of steam:

La Lison, renversée sur les reins, le ventre ouvert, perdait sa vapeur, par les robinets arrachés, les tuyaux crevés, en des souffles qui grondaient, pareils à des râles furieux de géante.

(IV, 1260)

⁷² Louâpre, 'La Bête et la Machine', p. 283.

⁷³ Hippolyte Taine, *Origines de la France contemporaine* (Paris: Laffont, 1972), p. 101.

The urge to movement has become violently defused from the urge to death which it concealed; the Death Instinct has gained the upper hand.⁷⁴ This is replayed later at the Croix-de-Maufras, when Jacques's desire to kill overwhelms the sexual urge which has been restraining it, and concealing it. All the energy of his libido is transferred to his desire to kill the latter instinct's previous object, and ultimately instinct itself. Sexual desire is opened up so that the path of least resistance leads beyond it towards death: 'La porte d'épouvante s'ouvrait sur ce gouffre noir du sexe, l'amour jusque dans la mort. détruire pour posséder davantage' (IV, 1297). The Death Instinct, aided and abetted by Eros into reaching its ultimate strength, paradoxically and necessarily kills it off. All that is left of the sexual instinct is 'ce gouffre noir du sexe', that is, the *fêlure*, through which the Death Instinct renders all other instincts subordinate to itself, before annihilating them.

The *fêlure*, is, however, not ultimately to blame; rather than being, as according to Deleuze, the Death Instinct itself, it is merely a means by which the Death Instinct makes its presence felt, both in the *drama* and in the *epos*. It is also, however, a conduit for optimism, even if this optimism is naïve. Like Progress, it is extrahistorical, and it is because Progress, in *La Bête humaine*, as in the wider culture of the nineteenth century, is mistakenly perceived as being historically present and tangible, as being of these times as of no other, and is seen in terms of these times rather than on a grander scale, that its worldly manifestation gives cause for pessimism. *La Bête humaine* may come to an overwhelmingly pessimistic conclusion about the human condition, but the grounds for this pessimism are short-term ones, based on the observation of what happens when the extrahistorical is mistaken for the historical, when technological and anthropological vision

⁷⁴ For a discussion of the identification of libido with movement, and indeed for an extensive Freudian reading of *La Bête humaine*, see Jean Borie, *Zola et les mythes. De la Nausée au salut* (Paris: Seuil, 1971), Ch. 2. See esp. p. 90: '[L]e train est sexualisé de toutes les manières, et d'abord de la façon la plus élémentaire, parce qu'il est mouvement, parce qu'il est vitesse'.

cannot see past its own immediate environment. Only when thermodynamic motors are perceived as such, and not as machines, with characteristics familiar to the popular sense of the age, can they truly, in an epic sense, go beyond the entropy which will cause them to run down. The epic Death Instinct causes the demise of *la Lison* in the dramatic sphere. Equilibrium is reached when the laws of thermodynamics, of the dissipation of energy when movement is produced by gas pressure, are obeyed, as they will be, inevitably. However, significantly, the unanthropomorphised, untamed, 608 is allowed in the final chapter to go beyond the mundane laws of nature, both by Jacques, '*la laissant galoper à sa fantaisie*' (IV, 1301), and by the implied author, who allows Carnot's Second Law to be flagrantly breached as the locomotive hurtles indifferently towards the future, a physical impossibility given the absence through death of its engineer and fireman, a legal impossibility given the necessary presence of a third party who could override such an *emballage*.⁷⁵ A thermodynamic, natural and social impossibility, perhaps, but a textual inevitability ensuring the indifferent triumph of an epic vision, which, paradoxically, is one which accepts the realities and limitations of modern technology, and of human capability, but which perceives technology in its own, extrahistorical terms and refuses to devalue it by placing it in the template of a nineteenth-century complacency reliant on seventeenth- and eighteenth-century conceptions of the world. Indeed, under such delusions, it is humanity, rather than its technological achievements, which is tragically limited. If, as Muriel Louâpre comments, '*la locomotive est le progrès, l'image positive de l'homme, et figure ce qui par contraste fait ressortir la bestialité de ce même homme*', the endowment of machines with the soul supposedly distinct from corporeal human nature will inevitably

⁷⁵ See N.a.f. 10274, f^{os} 504-05 (discussed by Mitterand in n. 2, IV, 1790). Lefèvre informed Zola that there would be a Conductor-in-Chief and a guard who would have access to a safety braking mechanism. However, as M. Wetherill points out, mechanical and topographical inconsistencies, often intentional, are essential to

allow them, at least in fiction such as Zola's, to transcend the laws of nature to which their creators remain inexorably subject, unless a new, more realistic, dare one say naturalistic vision of the world is adopted in preference to a realism still suffering from the hangover of Romanticism.⁷⁶ In this final scene, the *fêlure* provides a passage for the epic Life Instinct, and triumphs in allowing the locomotive, here an embodiment of indifferent Progress (as opposed to Lison's embodiment of progression towards thermal death), to pass beyond the pressure principle, unchecked, through an opening into the twentieth century and beyond. In the words of Deleuze: 'Le train comme symbole épique, avec les instincts qu'il transporte, et l'Instinct de mort qu'il représente, est toujours doué d'un avenir.'⁷⁷

Zola's narrative strategies. See M. Wetherill, 'Transgressions. Topographie et narration dans *La Bête humaine*', *Les Cahiers Naturalistes*, 70 (1996), 67-82.

⁷⁶ Louâpre, 'La Bête et la machine', p. 277.

⁷⁷ Deleuze, 'Zola et la fêlure', p. 23

Chapter Six

Maupassant, *Doxa* and the Banalisation of Modern Travel

If Zola novels such as *La Curée*, *Nana* and *La Bête humaine* serve to highlight the misplaced character of the economic, social and technological self-confidence of the late-nineteenth-century bourgeoisie, the work of Maupassant undermines other conceits which are no less pervasive. What perhaps distinguishes the latter author strategically from the former in this regard (at least in terms of subject-matter, before the question of narrative strategy is touched on) is the particular attention reserved by Maupassant for the petite bourgeoisie. According to Roland Barthes:

[C]'est la petite bourgeoisie qui est l'objet premier, obsessionnel pourrait-on dire, de l'art de Maupassant. C'est probablement une découverte importante du naturalisme que d'avoir vu que la petite bourgeoisie française, promue à un rôle politique particulier en 1848, constituait une totalité historique, un fait national défini par une économie, une esthétique et une morale, et propre, par conséquent, à être dépeinte dans une couleur aussi 'locale' que la noblesse de Balzac ou les paysans de George Sand. Flaubert, une fois de plus, est ici le grand initiateur, Flaubert dont Maupassant est en toutes choses bien plus le disciple que de Zola, auquel le rattache une identité artificielle d'école.¹

Whereas Zola, whose broad sweep of Second Empire society depicts all classes, including the petite bourgeoisie, nevertheless arguably grounds the voice of received opinion in the bourgeoisie proper, it is precisely the economic, aesthetic and moral frame of reference of the petite bourgeoisie identified by Barthes which is its seat in the work of Maupassant. We might usefully conceive of this discourse of received opinion in terms of Barthes's notion

¹ Roland Barthes, 'Maupassant et la physique du malheur' (1956), in Roland Barthes, *Œuvres complètes*. 3 vols, ed. Éric Marty (Paris: Seuil, 1993-95), I (1993), 534-37 (p. 535).

of the *Doxa*, present throughout the work of this latter-day scourge of the petite bourgeoisie, but formulated most explicitly in *Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes*:

La *Doxa* (mot qui va revenir souvent), c'est l'Opinion publique, l'Esprit majoritaire, le Consensus petit-bourgeois, la Voix du Naturel, la Violence du Préjugé.²

We have seen in the foregoing, particularly in the chapters on *Les Rougon-Macquart*, how naturalist fiction undermines the 'Opinion publique' of its time in terms of the latter's manifestation as a self-confident belief in Progress, technology, and the supposed self-sufficiency of the socio-economic structure of Second Empire France. Such 'Opinion' also appears in the form of cliché and *bêtise* in the work of Flaubert. There is, however, another side to the *Doxa*, both in the actual public discourse of the late nineteenth century, and as depicted by naturalism. There is in particular in the field of discourse on transport and travel a hysterically pessimistic strain of received opinion, contrasting with euphoria over progress, but paradoxically part of the same coin, rather in the same way that, as we saw in the previous chapter, pessimistic and euphoric views of transport technology were (as in the case of Vigny and Du Camp) voiced in the same terms. Now, where grand-bourgeois discourse on travel, whether optimistic or pessimistic, is centred mainly on questions of technology, economics, philosophy and anthropology (indeed, 'travel' as such is usually understood in terms of exotic foreign travel), there is, as we shall see, a particularly petit-bourgeois strain centred on the direct experience of the travelling public, which is rooted in fear of the unfamiliar, and widespread belief in exaggerated cliché about the modern travelling experience as perpetuated by popular journalism and its *faits divers*. Where the fiction of Maupassant in particular is interesting is in its undermining of both the euphoric

² Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes* (1975), in Barthes, *Œuvres complètes*, op. cit., III (1995), 79-250 (p. 130).

and the pessimistic versions of the travel *Doxa*. On the one hand, it attacks the romanticised view of travel, a hangover from the eighteenth-century Grand Tour; on the other, it ridicules the fears and suppositions of the *petit-bourgeois* traveller and (intradiegetically implied) reader, often one and the same.³ In both cases, what is effectively taking place is a process of banalisation: both those who would elevate mundane displacement to exotic voyage, and those who would overdramatise relatively safe modern travel into the most dangerous and threatening experience imaginable, are reminded that new forms of mobility have been around for some time, are not likely to go away, and have become an essentially banal (if transformative) part of the landscape.

Despite this commonality in outcome, different strategies are employed to attack these respective targets. Perhaps the most significant strategic difference is between short fictional and novel forms. What I intend to examine in this chapter are, firstly, those of Maupassant's *contes* which deal with railway travel, arguably emblematic of the depiction and dismissal of the *faits divers* approach to the modern transport experience, and then the novels *Bel-Ami* and *Pierre et Jean*, which to an extent synthesise quite a lot of what appears on the subject of modern transport in the novels of Flaubert and Zola discussed in previous chapters, performing the deflation of romantic enthusiasm for 'exotic' travel found in works by the one author, while very often also employing the imagery of anthropomorphic inexorability characteristic of the other. Why, however, should short and novel forms differ in this way? Why is the 'anti-hysterical' purpose in evidence in the former, and the 'anti-euphoric' tendency in the latter (at least, as I hope to show, in *Bel-Ami* and *Pierre et Jean*)? Is this coincidence, or can a particular form be said to be more

³ Here the term 'implied reader' is not necessarily meant in Wolfgang Iser's understanding of the term, based in so-called 'reader response' theory (see Wolfgang Iser, *The Implied Reader* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974)). Rather, the reader implied in Maupassant's short fiction, precisely because of the framing of narrative so characteristic of it, is an intradiegetic *persona* to which no alternative is permitted.

conducive to a particular purpose? We might start to hazard an answer to this question by considering why travel (modern travel in particular), is such a useful resource for the short-story writer.

Peter Cogman states that, leaving aside ‘the fact that people who had been on travels [...] would have tales to tell on their return’, travel has long performed a dual role in fiction:

An encounter on a journey can trigger events [...], but above all travel can bring characters together to generate events [...]. But it can also generate narration, *contes* rather than conquests, and provide a situation in which the act of narration is not only possible, but desirable.⁴

By the nineteenth century, ‘the railway journey was able to take over these two roles’. But crucially, the new infrastructural reality, if facilitating continued use of the essentially content-driven strategy identified above, also impacted on form:

The railway proves dually advantageous for a writer of *short* stories. If one of the few safe generalizations that one can make about short stories is that they are short, the railway journey provides a convenient way of restricting or setting a deadline either for the narration of an embedded narrative between passengers, or for the events narrated (all must be over by the time the journey is completed: the timetable comes to rule lives, and the narration of lives).⁵

Furthermore, there are restrictions imposed by the extraneous world of publishing and journalism:

The rigid constraints of the railway timetable are not without analogy with the limit of 2,500 to 3,000 words that newspaper publication was imposing on short-story writers in the period between 1870 and 1914, in contrast with the more flexible space available earlier in reviews and the more leisurely pace of horse-drawn transport.⁶

⁴ P. M.W. Cogman, ‘Marcel Schwob and the Railway Story’, *Australian Journal of French Studies*, 37 (2000), 22-39 (pp. 32-33).

⁵ Cogman, ‘Marcel Schwob and the Railway Story’, p. 33.

⁶ Cogman, ‘Marcel Schwob and the Railway Story’, pp. 33-34.

In this area, especially significant also in the particular case of Maupassant is that his short-story career developed out of his career as a journalist, consisting chiefly of *chroniques* in the same popular press of which the *fait divers* was such an emblematic feature. In many cases, the *conte* is hard to distinguish from the *chronique* with which Maupassant secured his early reputation, not least because the *chronique* was not simply *reportage* by a journalist. It is important to remember that Maupassant's usual journalistic *alter ego*, Maufrigneuse, is a *persona* as much as a pseudonym. Some criticism continues casually to take for granted that Maufrigneuse is Maupassant, and does not allow for any distancing between the two, so that the views of Maufrigneuse can be cited as evidence of the 'historical' Maupassant's views on various issues, and then used to interpret the fiction in such a way as to emphasise (for example) its supposed misogyny as a defining feature informing the text, rather than as something represented and very often ironised.⁷ Much in the same way that Racine is not necessarily Racine, Maupassant is neither necessarily Maupassant nor even Maufrigneuse.⁸ In answer to the question 'Qui parle?', therefore, we

⁷ See, for example, Mary L. Poteau-Tralie, *Voices of Authority. Criminal Obsession in Guy de Maupassant's Short Works* (New York: Peter Lang, 1994). One of the central theses of this work is that Maupassant's depiction of court cases arising from adultery and *faits divers* is informed by his misogyny, which is, apparently, 'well-documented' (p. 4). That the narrators of such fiction take the side of males and in presenting them as victims appeal to the sympathies of a male audience is taken as evidence that the fiction itself also assumes this position, without entertainment of the possibility that the narrator is an intradiegetic *persona*, a character represented and mediatized by the text. However, the intellectual integrity of the work is called into question by the use of such expressions as 'Maupassant says', 'Maupassant mentions', in relation to *chroniques* and *contes*, which, we only learn in endnotes, are signed by 'Maufrigneuse [Maupassant's pen-name]' (pp. 31-32; p. 43 nn. 32-34). Poteau-Tralie quotes (p. 33) Francis Steegmuller on the fact that 'the *chronique* [...] allowed [...] greater discursiveness than its American or British counterpart', and tended towards the *conte*, that is towards fiction. Instead of drawing the logical conclusion that this in fact distances Maupassant from his journalistic *persona*, who is akin to his arguably intradiegetic fictional narrators, Poteau-Tralie, strangely, does exactly the opposite. See Francis Steegmuller, *Maupassant: A Lion in the Path* (New York: Random House, 1949), pp. 144-45.

⁸ See Roland Barthes, 'Racine est Racine', in *Mythologies* (1957), in *Œuvres complètes*, op. cit., I, 561-719 (pp. 621-22). The type of tautological approach to culture identified here by Barthes as emblematic of the petit-bourgeois 'world picture' is perhaps apotheosised by the quotation from *Bouvard et Pécuchet* which appears as epigram: 'Le goût, c'est le goût' (p. 621).

might conclude, as Roland Barthes does in relation to Balzac, that:

Il sera à tout jamais impossible de le savoir, pour la bonne raison que l'écriture est destruction de toute voix, de toute origine. L'écriture, c'est ce neutre, ce composite, cet oblique où fuit notre sujet, le noir-et-blanc où vient se perdre toute identité, à commencer par celle-là même du corps qui écrit.⁹

So if we are going to be looking at works which we believe deride the petit-bourgeois world view, we may do well to eschew the sort of tautological criticism which is part and parcel of that same *Doxa*. This is crucial in that the multiplicity of frames in which Maupassant's short narratives occur constantly raises the question of whose discourse is being read, and of whether it is being read by us or by intradiegetic *narrataires*: indeed, 'qui lit/écoute/entend?' is just as important a question as 'qui parle?'.¹⁰ On Maupassant's introduction of this problematic, Angela Moger comments:

A provocative constant of Maupassant's narrative technique is the rapid introduction, within a slender containing narrative, of a narrator persona responsible for presenting the drama at the heart of the story. The 'primary', or initial, narrator exists only to introduce, on the first pages of each story, this 'authorial' figure and, on the last page, that teller's audience. [...]. Maupassant's invention of the narrator persona permits him [...] to install a persona of his audience, a listener who is being told the internal narrator's story.

⁹ Roland Barthes, 'La mort de l'auteur' (1968), in *Œuvres complètes*, op. cit., II (1994), 491-95 (p. 491).

¹⁰ On the *narrataire*, see Gérard Genette, *Figures III* (Paris: Seuil, 1972), pp. 265-67: 'Comme le narrateur, le narrataire est un des éléments de la situation narrative, et il se place nécessairement au même niveau diégétique; c'est-à-dire qu'il ne se confond pas plus a priori avec le lecteur (même virtuel) que le narrateur ne se confond nécessairement avec l'auteur' (p. 265). This is an area in which the aforementioned Poteau-Tralie makes numerous speculative and unsubstantiable pronouncements about the supposed reactions of the (extradiegetic) 'reader' to Maupassant's fiction, e.g. 'presented with a tale containing a loosely woven inner plot recounted by a domineering first-person narrator to an audience of courtroom officials, the reader of "Petition [sic] d'un viveur malgré lui" has no choice but to judge the adulterous woman, and by extension all women, harshly' (*Voices of Authority*, p. 17). Here the sense in which 'reader' is intended by Poteau-Tralie is unambiguously that of the extradiegetic, 'real' reader of the text (a *chronique* by Maupassant intradiegetically attributed to Maufrigneuse), rather than that of the intradiegetically implied readers of the letter of which the *chronique* takes the form and to whom it is explicitly addressed, in which latter case the statement would be unproblematic. See 'Pétition d'un viveur malgré lui' in Guy de Maupassant, *Contes et Nouvelles*, ed. Louis Forestier, 2 vols (Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1974, 1979) I (1974), 342-46 (this edition hereinafter referred to by volume and page number in the text).

The usual purpose of this installation is to provide a means of correcting the 'internal' reader's impression.¹¹ That is, the very frame structure is geared towards an undermining process, in terms of the undermining both of discourse and of its as it were received reception.

To return to the specificity of short fiction as opposed to the novel, it is to Barthes again that we might turn for the identification of yet another of its distinctive characteristics:

On s'est souvent demandé ce qui opposait le conte au roman. Je crois, pour ma part, que c'est un certain usage de la catastrophe. Le roman, le bon, le vrai, celui qui vous investit lentement et sûrement, n'est le plus souvent que l'histoire d'une dégradation: le malheur romanesque n'est jamais pur, il a une épaisseur plus existentielle que conceptuelle. Avec le conte, c'est tout le contraire: le malheur y existe comme un acte solitaire, indiscutable (le malheur ou le bonheur, c'est la même chose): les situations ne s'enchaînent pas, ne se perdent pas, elles s'affrontent et se rompent. La catastrophe a quelque chose d'organique dans le roman, et de mécanique dans le conte.¹²

Barthes's characterisation of the novel here seems particularly appropriate to the naturalist novel, and indeed, more than one of the novels examined so far in the present study could be described as 'l'histoire d'une dégradation', not least in their depiction of catastrophe (the corruption of Parisian bourgeois society, the long-term entropic decline of Jacques Lantier's locomotive: declines which are both 'organic', even if they precede and indeed precipitate respective collapses which are in their final stages 'mechanical'). These declines, furthermore, are of a bourgeois order; indeed, the overall decline of this order is represented 'organically' over several novels. In Maupassant's short fiction, the sense of immediate catastrophe, and of fear and incapacity in the face of it, is central rather to the undermining of petit-bourgeois discourse, and is in this respect to be compared with that

¹¹ Angela Moger, 'Narrative Structure in Maupassant: Frames of Desire', *PMLA*, 100 (1985), 315-27 (p. 315).

¹² Barthes, 'Maupassant et la physique du malheur', op. cit., p. 534.

found in Flaubert:

Dans certaines pages de romans, dans l'extraordinaire *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, dans le *Dictionnaire des idées reçues*, Flaubert a surtout poursuivi une mise en dérision de la petite bourgeoisie: il a reproduit – c'est à dire distancé et critiqué – l'aliénation statique de son langage. La forme même du conte a engagé Maupassant dans une description à la fois moins fine et plus dynamique: c'est moins la bêtise que l'impuissance petite-bourgeoise qui est ici décrite.¹³

Now the *impuissance* to which Barthes is specifically referring here is the sense of impotence or powerlessness of the petite bourgeoisie in the face of economic hardship and instability, a sense of being 'laissée à l'écart aussi bien de l'expansion affairiste que de l'éveil de la conscience ouvrière', but what should become apparent in the present discussion is that a similar sense of powerlessness, understandable in the same terms, manifests itself in the context of the petit-bourgeois experience of one of the major infrastructural features of 'le grand essor capitaliste de la seconde moitié du XIXe siècle', namely travel by train.¹⁴ So, given firstly that when catastrophe and travel are combined, we have two features central to the *conte*, and secondly that these features considered together constitute a petit-bourgeois preoccupation, we might expect short fiction about railway travel to be extremely effective on several levels in deriding the late nineteenth-century *Doxa*.

A minor but in this context important Maupassant text dealing with railway travel is *Notes d'un voyageur* (1884).¹⁵ This *chronique* contains observations relevant to many stories in which railway travel is an incidental, important or central element, but does not, strictly speaking, fall into the category of either *conte* or *nouvelle*. As Louis Forestier affirms, 'ces pages sont, avant tout, des notations et des impressions. Elles ne relèvent du

¹³ Barthes, 'Maupassant et la physique du malheur', op. cit., p. 535.

¹⁴ Barthes, 'Maupassant et la physique du malheur', op. cit., p. 535.

¹⁵ I, 1173-77.

récit ... que dans les dernières lignes' (I, 1628). However, several key features of naturalist railway fictions are present. One of these is the linking of the locomotive with the natural or supernatural realms, in terms of real or imagined beasts: 'Le train [...] s'enfonce dans la nuit, haletant, soufflant sa vapeur, éclairant de reflets rouges des murs, des haies, des bois, des champs' (I, 1173). Also present is the idea of the railway as agent of modernity gradually making its democratising way into 'exotic', exclusive and unspoilt locations ('Aucun chemin de fer, aucune voiture publique ne pénètre dans ces vallons superbes et boisés' (I, 1175)) and as facilitator of new forms of travel, particularly tourism and the 'voyage de santé' (the 'touristic' journey through all the towns of the Riviera culminating in Menton, where 'les oranges mûrissent et les poitrinaires guérissent' (I, 1177)).¹⁶

These are themes taken up at greater length in Maupassant's novels, but here are mentioned in passing: as far as the *Contes* are concerned, perhaps most significant is the identification of the railway compartment as a closed space where individuals are brought together and become subject to descriptive and narrative scrutiny, particularly in terms of late nineteenth-century social, sexual and medical preoccupations (where indeed these are separable). In *Notes d'un voyageur*, various character types, possessed of or confirming staple attitudes are identified. Deformity is represented in the person of the hunchback, 'un petit paquet jeté sur la banquette', stern propriety in 'la vieille dame', who is 'en éveil, soupçonneuse, inquiète, comme un gardien chargé de veiller sur l'ordre et sur la moralité du wagon', concerned about the marital status of a young couple, 'immobiles, les genoux enveloppés du même châle, les yeux ouverts, sans parler' (I, 1173). The railway carriage is

¹⁶ In relation to the notion of how coach travel does not have the same 'de-exoticising' effect on 'unspoilt' landscape as rail travel, despite the similarity (certainly for narrative purposes) between the enclosed space of the coach and the compartment, consider *Rencontre* (a) (I, 440-44): 'Qui n'a passé la nuit, les yeux ouverts, dans la petite diligence dreilindante des contrées où la vapeur est encore ignorée. à côté d'une jeune femme inconnue [...]'. The other main difference between the two modes of transport is that in the railway compartment, sleep is much more likely than in the 'pre-modern' counterpart on which it is modelled (see Schivelbusch below, Ch. 5, 'The Compartment'), as is highlighted in *La Maison Tellier* (I. 256-83).

a locus of moral and sexual supposition, and of secondary narration. The primary narrative purpose in many of the *contes* seems to be to demonstrate the interaction between often incompatible individuals confined in a closed space, and importantly, in so doing to confound expectations and undermine presuppositions about railway travel. In a wider sense, Maupassant's *contes* document the banalisation of various phenomena of modernity, of which railway travel is only one key example, in the face of a mindset which exaggerated their supposed drama. This was a mentality which, as Wolfgang Schivelbusch reminds us (in relation to the Poinot and Briggs cases of 1860 and 1864 respectively), permitted 'only two cases of murder, occurring four years apart and in two different countries, [...] to trigger a collective psychosis'.¹⁷ Indeed, the late nineteenth century was witness to a 'hysteria' about railway travel, particularly in terms of a fear of primitive violence and sexuality, linked both with the enclosure of the compartment, and with the relentless mechanical movement of the locomotive. Such 'catastrophic' hysteria was generated by such documents as the article on *Chemins de fer* in Larousse's *Grand Dictionnaire du XIXe siècle*, which, while on the one hand hailing the very words 'Chemins de fer' as 'synonymes de civilisation, de progrès et de fraternité', and brimming with enthusiasm for 'ces magnifiques voies de circulation qui resteront l'honneur éternel de la science', lists paradoxically a litany of crimes and relates grisly anecdotes of the mishaps of naïve passengers, containing references to the 'angoisse du voyageur' and to the railway

¹⁷ Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey. Trains and Travel in the 19th Century* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980), p. 88.

compartiment as 'lieu privilégié de la dangerosité urbaine'.¹⁸ The 'Chapitre des accidents' in particular contains language which might dissuade even the heartiest traveller:

Que de victimes, que de deuils, que d'horribles images, que de scènes de désolation évoquent ces mots: *accidents de chemin de fer!*... Trains qui se heurtent et se pulvérisent; machines qui font explosion, semant la voie de membres sanglants et mutilés; incendie des convois en marche; déraillements, ruptures de ponts, chutes de trains dans un abîme!... Outre leur gravité terrible, ces accidents ont ceci de particulièrement effrayant que toute lutte contre le danger est absolument impossible: sang-froid, énergie, courage ne servent à rien; vous êtes tout entier à la merci de l'événement, annihilé, livré pieds et poings liés au péril, aussi impuissant à le combattre qu'il vous était impossible de le prévenir.¹⁹

This text expresses very well the sense of impotence in the face of catastrophic danger, against which any struggle is apparently impossible. There is also perhaps a sexual undercurrent here, an expression of the fear that machines are usurping the reproductive role of men, and in so doing ('semant la voie de membres sanglants et mutilés') are castrating them, rendering them irredeemably impotent.²⁰ A subsequent detailed enumeration of accidents is followed by a chapter on railway crime, which plays on similar fears, with the added factor of potential sexual activity. What distinguishes the train from

¹⁸ 'Chemins de fer', in Pierre Larousse, *Grand Dictionnaire du XIXe siècle*, 17 Vols (Paris: Librairie Classique Larousse et Boyer, 1866-76), III (1868), 1130-69 (p. 1130). The status of the *Grand Dictionnaire* as representative of late-nineteenth-century *Doxa* is perhaps enshrined in its explicit espousal of the Museum principle, which, according to Daniel Desormeaux, surpasses that of Flaubert's two *bonshommes*: 'La dérive livresque de Bouvard et Pécuchet, n'est-elle pas, toute fictive qu'elle soit, due à l'ignorance d'une idée aussi simple que le Livre unique? C'est parce que tout y est, sans grande distinction, que *Le Grand Dictionnaire* croit pouvoir stabiliser le phénomène des dictionnaires et réaliser son projet de faire la synthèse de toute l'histoire des idées dans un seul et unique ouvrage'. Larousse intended to provide an alternative to academic dictionaries such as Littré which would be accessible to a socially wider audience; one popularizing measure he introduced was the use of anecdote instead of quotation to illustrate definitions. A consequence of this, according to Desormeaux, was that definitions became obfuscated by anecdote, which 'véhicule un modèle narratif qui se détache de tout contexte et répond au besoin de l'esprit du locuteur de voiler son langage avec la parole d'autrui'. It might be argued that Maupassant turns the veiling potential of anecdote to purposes which subvert the anecdotal form. See Daniel Desormeaux, 'Du Bon Usage de l'anecdote: *Le Grand Dictionnaire Universel du XIXe Siècle* de Pierre Larousse', *Romanic Review*, 89 (1998), 231-42 (p. 233; pp. 233-34; p. 237).

¹⁹ Larousse, 'Chemins de fer', op. cit., p. 1154.

²⁰ Freud concludes 'The Ego and the Id' with the observation that it is 'possible to regard the fear of death, like the fear of conscience, as a development of the fear of castration'. In this case, the two would appear to be conflated. See Sigmund Freud, 'The Ego and the Id' (1923), in *The Freud Reader*, ed. by Peter Gay (London: Vintage, 1995), pp. 629-58 (p. 658).

the stage-coach, for example, is that violence and cupidity are visited now upon the passenger rather than on the driver:

[A]ujourd'hui, sous le règne béni des chemins de fer, le mécanicien, le chauffeur et les autres employés du train sont tranquillement à leur porte, alors qu'à côté d'eux on tue, on étouffe, on assassine, on viole.²¹

In the absence of suitable safety measures, we read, 'nous pouvons être assassinés, nos femmes, nos filles et nos sœurs violées'.²² Whereas the implicitly male readers of such warnings are powerless, impotent as it were, in the face of murderous violence, a further threat is presented by the sexual potency of the feared assailants of their womenfolk. These warnings are complemented by those of other more specialist works, such as Eugène Chapus's *Voyageur, Prenez Garde à Vous!*, which advises passengers to avoid sharing compartments with the corpulent, and counsels men in particular to carry weapons, that is, to come forearmed against impotence in the face of danger. In general, 'il y a des précautions à prendre en chemin de fer contre les aventuriers et les aventures. Les aventuriers sont un danger pour les hommes, les aventures sont un danger pour les femmes'.²³ Statements like this, while perhaps being expressed with tongue somewhat uneasily in cheek, highlight the underlying currents of popular belief about railway travel, the main thrust of which is that trains are dangerous, not only on account of the potential for mechanical failure, or for violence, but also because of the threat of sexual activity involving women, whether it be uninvited or, more worryingly, consensual. The threat of the latter to male sexual potency and socio-sexual control is as troubling as male impotence in the face of an assailant or a mechanical disaster.

²¹ Larousse, 'Chemins de fer', op. cit., p. 1157.

²² Larousse, 'Chemins de fer', op. cit., p. 1158.

²³ Eugène Chapus, *Voyageur, Prenez Garde à Vous!* (Paris: Decaux, 1877), p. 51.

Maupassant's *contes* constantly undermine such paranoia, whether this be about the uncontrollable movement to which the passenger is subjected, or about the primitive and/or sexual violence likely to befall occupants of compartments, or indeed about the threat to male potency and political hegemony of female involvement in consensual sexual activity. *Notes d'un voyageur* finishes with an embedded narrative warranting the piece's inclusion in the collected *Contes et Nouvelles*. The *chroniqueur* scarcely conceals his contempt for the anecdote's narrator, 'un Marseillais qui raconte obstinément des drames de chemin de fer, des assassinats et des vols' (I, 1177). There follows a sordid and farcical account of how a Corsican's enthusiasm to observe the *convoi* of which his carriage is a part results in his decapitation by a tunnel, delayed discovery of which has the end result that 'le cou ne saignait seulement plus; tout avait coulé le long de la route' (I, 1177). Such tales about the trail of blood left by railway happenings become almost a staple of compartmental etiquette, as do their female addressees' 'hysterical' reactions to them: 'Une des dames poussa un soupir, ferma les yeux, et s'abattit vers sa voisine. Elle avait perdu connaissance...' (I, 1177).²⁴ The ellipsis here perhaps indicates an ironising of the notion that this is how women are supposed to behave.

A similarly embedded narrative is to be found in *En Voyage* (1883; I, 810-15). Again, both framing account and framed narrative occur in a compartment, exploited both for narrative expediency and for subject matter. Paranoia about murderous and potentially sexual violence comes immediately to the fore. The female passengers are singled out as being particularly vulnerable, not only to any violence which might occur, but also to the

²⁴ See Jann Matlock, *Scenes of Seduction. Prostitution, Hysteria and Reading Difference in Nineteenth-Century France* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994). In Maupassant, the supposed dangers to women posed respectively by narrative fictions and by rail travel often coalesce; this 'travelling difference', as it were, is linked in turn, as is discussed elsewhere here, with generalized nineteenth-century beliefs about prostitution and about women's physiological and psychological make-up.

emotional disquiet produced by accounts of attacks on trains.

On se mit à parler du mystérieux et insaisissable meurtrier qui, depuis deux ans, s'offre, de temps en temps, la vie d'un voyageur. Chacun faisait des suppositions, chacun donnait son avis; les femmes regardaient en frissonnant la nuit sombre derrière les vitres, avec la peur de voir apparaître soudain une tête d'homme à la portière. Et on se mit à raconter des histoires effrayantes de mauvaises rencontres, des tête-à-tête avec des fous dans un rapide, des heures passées en face d'un personnage suspect.

(I, 810)

The women are vulnerable and biddable addressees of the tales of compartmental derring-do recounted 'à son honneur' by each of the men, followed by the main embedded narrative provided by the more humble person of a doctor, en route to Paris from the Midi.

In the doctor's story, a terminally ill aristocratic Russian woman is travelling to a sanatorium in Menton. Despite scare stories about rail travel, the great convenience and mobility afforded by it often outweighed other considerations. In the Countess Baranow's case, other considerations, in particular the fear of assault, are outweighed by questions of class: 'Elle prit le train, seule dans son wagon, ses gens de service occupant un autre compartiment' (I, 811). On the entry into her compartment of a wounded man, an intrusion which seems all the more inevitable for her obsessive and visible counting of her money, her fear is intensified, and its presumed basis, rooted in the *Doxa* of railway crime, is relayed by the doctor's account in *style indirect libre*: 'Cet homme, certes, l'avait vue compter son or, et il était venu pour la voler et la tuer' (I, 811). Despite the intruder's assurances, she almost instinctively drops the money, 'ses genoux s'étant rapprochés' (I, 812). The man, presumably a political refugee from the Tsarist authorities, and thus probably of similar social origin to the woman's, soon reassures her and they enter, at her request, an unexplained pact of silence for the rest of the journey, a pact broken only once, when the stranger, disguised as her manservant, puts to her a question often employed by male passengers elsewhere in the *Contes* as prelude to seduction, 'N'avez-vous besoin de

rien?’ (I, 813).²⁵ Perhaps suspecting ulterior motives, she sends him to fetch her maid, after which he disappears. Once settled in Menton, the Countess, until her death shortly afterwards, is loved from afar by the Quixotic stranger whom she has rescued.

The tale’s mysterious outcome thus assured, the doctor sums it up as ‘la plus singulière aventure de chemin de fer que je connaisse’ (implying that the railway is a locus of ‘aventures’ of varying degrees of singularity). This prompts an intervention by a female passenger ‘à mi-voix’:

‘Ces deux êtres-là ont été moins fous que vous ne croyez... Ils étaient... ils étaient...’.
(I. 815)

Whatever they were, is, however, kept from addressees both intradiegetic and extradiegetic: ‘elle ne pouvait plus parler, tant elle pleurait. Comme on changea de conversation pour la calmer, on ne sut pas ce qu’elle voulait dire’. The overwhelming effects of a male ‘narrative of hysteria’, combined with collectively sanctioned attention to her plight which effectively silences her, appear thus to prevent a woman from being a successful narrator herself (her silence paralleling that of the escapee who has entered into a relationship of dependence with the countess), and the framed story, whether it had a definitive ending or not, is left unresolved.

Another major compartment-based framing narrative occurs in *Le Rosier de Mme Husson* (1887; II, 950-66). In this case, though, the embedded story has no railway connections other than the proximity to the town where the action occurs of the primary narrator’s derailment. However, what the opening paragraph does do is to banalise the impact of a railway accident, so that it becomes a minor mechanical inconvenience rather

²⁵ This is certainly the case in *Les Sœurs Rondoli*, *Rencontre* (b) and *Ce Cochon de Morin* (discussed below) among others.

than the doom-laden organic catastrophe of such later works as *La Bête humaine*, even if the description of the accident does contain language somewhat prescient of Zola's novel.²⁶ A distinction, to be found throughout the *Contes*, is established between the travelling space of the compartment and the locomotive, whose animal death-throes perhaps prefigure those of Zola's Lison:

Une roue s'était brisée à la machine qui gisait en travers de la voie. Le tender et le wagon de bagages, déraillés aussi, s'étaient couchés à côté de cette mourante qui râlait, geignait, sifflait, soufflait, crachait, ressemblait à ces chevaux tombés dans la rue, dont le flanc bat, dont la poitrine palpite, dont les naseaux fument et dont tout le corps frissonne, mais qui ne paraissent plus capables du moindre effort pour se relever et se remettre à marcher.

(II, 950).

Railway travel again provides an opportunity for a separate narrative, with which the description of the locomotive's demise has no connection, and one which is not, as might have been expected, about rail travel.

What, however, of those *contes* where the railway compartment as closed space is exploited not merely as 'framing' device, but explicitly in terms of its enclosure? Matthew McNamara contends that in Maupassant's *nouvelles*, 'there is quite a remarkable association of the motif of feminine sensual appetite with representations of spatial enclosure'.²⁷ In many *contes* dealing with the 'boîte roulante' of the railway carriage the emphasis seems rather to be on masculine sensual appetite, although feminine sensual appetite, with its threat to male control (as perceived, or indeed feared, by male characters or narrators) is certainly a factor. It is perhaps movement which makes the difference. As

²⁶ Louis Forestier notes (II, 1644): 'Ce qu'on évoque...à propos de ce paragraphe, c'est *La Bête humaine*. Le roman de Zola ne paraîtra qu'en 1889, mais le projet en était vivace chez l'écrivain depuis de nombreuses années; Maupassant pouvait le savoir. Ce fut d'ailleurs lui qui s'entremet pour permettre à Zola d'effectuer son fameux voyage Paris-Mantes sur une locomotive'.

²⁷ Matthew Macnamara, 'Femininity and Enclosure in Maupassant's *Nouvelles*', in *L'Hénaurme siècle. A Miscellany of Essays on Nineteenth-Century Literature*, ed. by W.L. McLendon (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1984), pp. 155-65 (p. 155).

Jean Pierrot suggests, 'le mouvement, le déplacement paraissent entretenir, dans cette œuvre, des rapports particulièrement étroits avec la femme et avec la sexualité'.²⁸ What is remarkable is the frequency, raised by Pierrot, with which the compartment turns out to be a locus of thwarted attempts at seduction, many of which seem initially (to the would-be seducer) assured of success. Taking as key text *Un Échec* (1885; II, 498-505), an account of an encounter on a steamboat, followed by a journey in a *coupé*, a moving *cabinet particulier* procured by the narrator in which he fails to seduce the wife of an aging military man, Pierrot posits the paradoxical nature of the links between travel and sexual conquest: 'ce à quoi nous font le plus souvent assister ces textes, c'est moins qu'à la conquête qu'à l'échec, du moins en ce qui concerne le voyage en wagon ou en diligence'.²⁹ In nearly all such *Contes*, whatever actually happens, initial expectations, whether of protagonist or 'implied reader', are confounded: that is, the *Doxa* of the railway carriage as a locus of *aventures* is subverted. *Ce Cochon de Morin* (1882; I, 641-52) is the story of a provincial *petit commerçant*, who, returning from a fortnight in Paris ('Cela vous met le feu dans le sang'), follows a young woman into the empty compartment which she has chosen on the night train. His intention is to seduce her, in which endeavour he considers his chances of success to be high, given what he has heard or read:

Il se disait: 'On raconte tant d'aventures de chemin de fer. C'en est une peut-être qui se présente pour moi.[...] Il me suffirait peut-être d'être audacieux.[...] Il lui suffirait d'un geste pourtant pour m'indiquer qu'elle ne demande pas mieux'.

(I, 642)

²⁸ Jean Pierrot, 'Espace et mouvement dans les récits de Maupassant', in *Flaubert et Maupassant écrivains normands: Actes du Colloque de Rouen* (Paris: PUF, 1981), pp. 167-96 (p. 186). Compare Jean Borie's remark, made with specific reference to the locomotive in *La Bête humaine*, that 'Le train est sexualisé de toutes les manières, et d'abord de la façon la plus élémentaire, parce qu'il est mouvement, parce qu'il est vitesse'. *Zola et les mythes. De la Nausée au salut* (Paris: Seuil, 1971), p. 90.

²⁹ Pierrot, 'Espace et mouvement', p. 187.

After spending the night formulating suitably audacious conversational gambits, he convinces himself that his youthful companion's smile on waking is an invitation, becomes overwhelmed by what the narrator terms 'une audace de poltron' and assaults her. However, as the train soon stops, he is quickly apprehended. Thus landed in trouble, he enlists the help of a journalist friend (the narrator, as it turns out) who visits the girl's relatives to dissuade them, his readers and political bedfellows, from taking matters further on account of the harm it might do their niece, whom he then proceeds to seduce under their roof, without any risk of being branded a 'cochon'.

This theme of unexpected narratorial seduction recurs in *Les Sœurs Rondoli* (1884; II, 133-61), in which the intradiegetic narrator, Pierre Jouvenet, recounts the story behind his two thwarted 'tentatives' to penetrate any further into Italy than Genoa. The first journey begins with his attempt to persuade his reluctant friend Paul ('tous les actes de Paul ont les femmes pour mobiles' (II, 135)) to come along, an attempt in which he succeeds by recounting 'des aventures de voyage' emphasising the prospects of meeting available women, prospects enhanced 'grâce à une recommandation que j'avais pour un certain signore Michel Amoroso dont les relations sont fort utiles aux voyageurs' (II, 136). It is hinted quite strongly that these 'histoires de voyage' are bogus; indeed, the narrator is remarkable for his lack of naïveté about rail travel, about which he has no illusions and actually seems to know quite a bit (albeit in a somewhat hypochondriac manner) lamenting 'les nuits en chemin de fer, le sommeil secoué des wagons avec des douleurs dans la tête et

des courbatures dans les membres, les réveils éreintés dans cette boîte roulante' (II, 133).³⁰ Paul's *Doxa*-informed gullibility, on the other hand, is what ensures that his eagerness to seduce the young woman who enters their compartment in Marseille will be in vain. There follows an awkward journey in which the narrator acts as interpreter for his non-Italophone friend's patter, to which the woman remains indifferent for the remainder of the journey. However, once in Genoa, she consents to join the narrator in his hotel room, much to the annoyance of Paul and his new-found sense of moral propriety. After three weeks of uncomplicated cohabitation, the woman leaves, instructing the narrator to come and find her at the house of a Mme Rondoli, which encounter he forsakes, returning to Paris. Returning out of curiosity the following year, he finds not Francesca (who has departed and found happiness with a M. Bellemin, apparently 'un grand peintre' in Paris, who 'l'a rencontrée en passant [...], dans la rue, oui, monsieur, dans la rue', and 'l'a aimée tout de suite' (II, 159)) but her sister, with whom her mother (the widow of a railwayman) arranges an introduction, and with whom he spends the next fortnight before returning to Paris, not forgetting to leave a gift for the Rondoli *ménage* ('Ça coûte cher, allez, d'élever quatre enfants!' (II, 160)).

There is a strong undercurrent of prostitution here, from the imaginary and improbably named pimp Amoroso, to the *de facto* procurement by Mme Rondoli of her *filles* ('Est-ce que vous êtes tout seul cette année?' (II, 159); 'J'en ai encore deux autres' (II, 160)). Francesca, the elder Rondoli sister, does not remain in any fixed location for any

³⁰ This self-aware enumeration (perhaps a 're-ironised' echo of 'la mélancolie des paquebots, les froids réveils sous la tente' etc. in *L'Éducation sentimentale* (p. 420)) is none the less informed by prevalent beliefs about the physiological effects of railway travel. See Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey*, Ch. 7, 'The Pathology of the Railroad Journey' (pp. 118-26). One medical text of the 1880s claimed that physical strain was a result of the 'new ratio between travelling time and traversed space' (p. 120); noise factors and the rate of change of optical impressions were also instrumental (see esp. pp. 120-21). However, travellers gradually become accustomed to 'the demolition of traditional time-space relationships and the dissolution of reality' (p. 153) by developing what Freud refers to as the 'stimulus shield' (pp. 152-60).

great length of time; she is encountered 'in circulation' on the railway (in hereditary accordance with her *cheminot* father's profession). Contemplating his next trip to Italy, the narrator concludes the story with the hope 'que Mme Rondoli possède encore deux filles' (II, 161).

Exploitation by protagonist as well as by narrator of the assumed status of the compartment as locus of seduction (as well of chance meeting) is the central theme of *Rencontre* ((b)1884; I, 1231-38). A woman is able to pass off her pregnancy as the result of a reconciliation with her estranged husband, by emerging from the overnight Paris-Nice train, having spent the journey alone in the carriage with him. The Baron d'Étraille's wife is able to capitalize on the presumption of her friends, and indeed of her husband, about what happens between couples, however estranged, in railway compartments. The Baron is further misled by the supposedly chance nature of their meeting, echoing his supposedly chance discovery of his wife's adultery six years beforehand ('Ce fut un hasard, un vrai hasard'), and wishes to take advantage of it:

[C]ette femme étrangère, inconnue, rencontrée par hasard dans un wagon était à lui, lui appartenait de par la loi. Il n'avait qu'à dire: 'Je veux'.

(I, 1235)

As if she were a complete stranger, he utters the standard male enquiry: 'Berthe, n'avez-vous besoin de rien?' (I, 1236). This is the beginning of a vain attempt, catalysed by the closed space of the railway compartment, to repossess his wife, resulting in her revelation that she has contrived the encounter as a means of preserving appearances. The powerful mythology of railway travel is exploited on two fronts. The Baron, dumbfounded by his discovery that the meeting has not been by chance, or rather indeed ordained by fate, is too speechless to contradict his wife's explanation to her friends on the platform that he has

accompanied her 'pour ne pas me laisser voyager seule', and that 'nous faisons quelquefois des fugues comme cela, en bons amis qui ne peuvent vivre ensemble' (I, 1238). The impending motherhood which she suspects can thus if necessary be accepted as the inevitable result of a conjugal encounter in the hermetically sealed space of the compartment, which in this case, as elsewhere, functions as literal as well as narrative 'piège'.³¹

In fact, it is very often the case in the *Contes* that the theme of motherhood surfaces unexpectedly where the sexual act which may or may not lead to it is expected, but fails to materialise. Two stories in particular, *En Wagon* and *Idylle*, illustrate a preoccupation with the motif of maternity in what is perhaps an ironic identification of the compartment with the womb. At the same time, the themes of railway paranoia and prostitution are no less apparent. Indeed, what is perhaps suggested here is that discourse on prostitution is bound up with that on maternity.

En Wagon (1885; II, 478-84) is the account of the journey from Paris to Clermont-Ferrand of three schoolboys and a priest, who finds himself acting as midwife to the compartment's female occupant. His presence is occasioned by paranoia on the part of the boys' mothers about the moral dangers of train travel:

[U]ne vilaine affaire de mœurs avait eu lieu quelques jours auparavant dans un wagon. Et ces dames demeuraient persuadées que toutes les filles de la capitale passaient leur existence dans les rapides, entre l'Auvergne et la gare de Lyon. Les échos de *Gil Blas*, d'ailleurs, au dire de M. de Bridioie, signalaient la présence à Vichy, au Mont-Dore et à La Bourbole, de toutes les horizontales connues et inconnues.

(II, 478)

Their susceptibility to the prurience of popular journalism intensified due to the mediation

³¹ See Micheline Besnard-Coursodon, *Étude thématique et structurale de l'œuvre de Maupassant: Le Piège* (Paris: Nizet, 1973).

of such information by male bourgeois authority in the form of M. de Bridioie, they put two and two together and jump to conclusions about the morally menacing combination of the Auvergne and the compartment. And it is specifically the enclosed space of the compartment rather than the train itself which is the locus of the threat posed by such women of ill-repute:

Pour y être, elles avaient dû y venir en wagon; et elles s'en retournaient indubitablement encore en wagon; elles devaient même s'en retourner sans cesse pour revenir tous les jours.
(II. 478)

Having concluded that this represents 'un va-et-vient continu d'impures sur cette maudite ligne', the distressed mothers lament the fact 'que l'accès des gares ne fût interdit aux femmes suspectes' (II, 478-79).³²

The mothers' attitudes represent a variation on the usual paranoia over railway travel, which takes the form of concern for the physical safety and virtue of female travellers at risk from male strangers; here the concern is for the moral well-being of male youths, at risk from corruption by 'impures'. This seems to suggest that widespread fear for women's safety is indissociable from a fear of women unrestricted in their movements (linked in turn with a generalised, perhaps psychosexual, fear of uncontrollable and repetitive movement). However, it is not in fact the supposed multitude of 'impures' but 'tous les baigneurs de l'Auvergne' who have succeeded in pressing for a direct train.

L'abbé Lecuir also seems, thanks to the boys' mothers, concerned about the morality of potential travelling companions:

³² The nineteenth-century notion of the 'femme suspecte' is dealt with by Jill Harsin, who contends that, despite initial good intentions on the part of the authorities, any unaccompanied woman was 'une femme suspecte', a 'clandestine' prostitute subject to harassment by the police. Jill Harsin, *Policing Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century Paris* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), p. xvii. The terms 'connues' et 'inconnues' perhaps relate further to the distinction between registered and unregistered prostitutes ('soumises' and 'insoumises').

Il cherchait un compartiment vide ou occupé par des gens d'aspect respectable, car il avait l'esprit hanté par toutes les recommandations minutieuses que lui avaient faites Mmes de Sarcagnes, de Vaulacelles et de Bridioie.

(II, 479).

This quest proves easy; the 'vieux monsieur' seeing off the woman in the compartment is decorated with the *Légion d'honneur*.³³ 'Il y eut une longue embrassade, puis un employé ferma les portières et le train se mit en route' (II, 480). Thus is the young woman wrenched from her mother's arms, and thrust into the hermetically sealed and mobile space of the compartment in (or indeed from) which birth is to occur.

The priest's sermon to the boys on their duties is interrupted by 'un profond soupir'. Elsewhere, the sigh is what indicates to prospective seducers the supposed sexual availability of fellow passengers. However, this sigh is the first sign, not of impending copulation, but of its result, part of a gradual build-up of auditory markers, culminating in 'un cri bizarre et léger' by the new-born baby (II, 482). Meanwhile 'le train roulait à toute vitesse [...], secouait de sa trépidation frémissante le chapelet de voyageurs enfermés dans les wagons' (II, 480-81). The passengers are helpless links in a chain, projectiles enclosed in spaces which are themselves links in another chain, the unrelenting movement of which, as imminent childbirth approaches, parallels the unstoppable continuation of the species.

The abbé's reaction to the woman's condition ("Vous sentez-vous indisposée, madame?"; "Si je puis quelque chose pour vous, madame?") (II, 481)) is not unlike that of railway predators elsewhere in the *Contes*: an initial enquiry about the good health of the

³³ Compare *La Maison Tellier* (I, 256-83), Ch. II, when a bourgeois couple enters a compartment full of prostitutes. The wife is 'saisie de se trouver au milieu d'une aussi belle société' in the bourgeois space of the 'wagon de seconde classe' (p. 264).

intended seducee, followed by an offer of help or sustenance.³⁴ The woman makes light of her predicament, not mentioning her pregnancy, and enlisting popular belief about rail travel to explain her condition. 'Je suis un peu malade depuis quelque temps, et le mouvement du train me fatigue' (II, 481).

Once labour commences, the boys are instructed to avert their gaze via the window so that their innocence, as their mothers have requested, will be maintained. On arrival, the priest goes to great lengths to reassure the mothers, shocked by the presence of 'la frêle bête humaine qu'il venait de cueillir' that their wishes have been carried out: that the boys remain ignorant of the whole process of intimate human relations and their ultimate result. Non-exposure to prostitution is happily replaced by non-exposure to birth (II, 483).

Idylle (1884; I, 1193-97) is another text where 'maternal' activity is a substitute for the sexual intercourse which the popular imagination might expect. The opening description contains the standard, unironised 'bête' imagery of the train, 'glissant comme un serpent de fer entre la mer et la montagne [...], et entrant brusquement dans la gueule noire des tunnels ainsi qu'une bête en son trou' (I, 1193). The enclosure of the moving carriage, combined with the heat of the Midi, intensifies the desire of a young woman, a wet-nurse by profession, to breast-feed, to the extent that she provides this 'service' to the hungry young man sitting opposite her. At a halt, the woman notices a child being breast-fed, and remarks that were she able to feed it, 'ça le calmerait et moi donc. Il me semble que je renaîtrais' (I, 1196). What might be expected to be sexual tension resulting in copulation with no procreative intention is replaced by the dominance of maternal instinct

³⁴ The figure of the predatory clergyman was not an uncommon one; indeed, it had perhaps attained the level of anticlerical cliché. Larousse reports (with barely concealed glee) that 'le père Archange, ancien supérieur des Capucins de France, fut surpris dans un coupé de *Chemin de fer* en conversation criminelle avec une dame de Marseille [...]. Le scandale causé par cette affaire fut d'autant plus grand que, quelques mois avant son escapade amoureuse, le Capucin s'était distingué par son zèle dans une mission à Grasse: il avait fait brûler en place publique tous les ouvrages libertins qu'il avait pu se procurer dans la ville'. Larousse, 'Chemins de fer', op. cit., p. 1158 (emphasis in original).

with a definite reproductive element. The movement of the train combines with the overwhelming odours of the innocently seminal natural environment to prompt the wet-nurse's fellow passenger into offering relief, so that finally, she is able to breathe 'avec force, avec bonheur, savourant les haleines des fleurs mêlées aux souffles d'air que le mouvement du train jetait dans les wagons' (I, 1197).

In relation to *En Wagon* and *Idylle*, Pierrot posits an apparently Freudian reading of the evocation of movement in a closed space as 'peut-être moins un désir d'évasion qu'une nostalgie fondamentale du sein maternel'.³⁵ There is certainly a 'maternal' element, but it cannot be seen in isolation from the anticipation of sex as non-procreative as it is non-forthcoming, or from 'hysteria' in the wider sense of its meaning. Similarly, if attempts at sexual conquest are in vain, in such *contes* as *Un Échec*, *Rencontre* and *Ce Cochon de Morin*, it is not only to the 'closed womb' that the reader might look for explanation, but to the accompanying disruption of the closed narrative circuit of petit-bourgeois hysteria. Any procreative motifs which find concrete expression are ultimately sexless, to do with childbirth, child-rearing and the continuation of the human species. In many ways, Maupassant demonstrates the literally hysterical limits of the space in which nineteenth-century preoccupations impose the limits of their own 'hysterical' narrative expectations.

It could be argued that if there is a general purpose in Maupassant's depiction of the compartment, it is more than anything else an attempt to document the banality of railway travel, to dedramatise it and yet at the same time to demonstrate its centrality to the dramatising hysteria of late nineteenth-century popular and journalistic culture. If crime, seduction or prostitution do exist on the railways, they occur when least expected or in such a manner as to be imperceptible to supposedly worldly-wise protagonists or narrators. This

³⁵ Pierrot, 'Espace et mouvement', p. 187

occurs in *La Maison Tellier* (I, 256-83), where the democratising effect of rail travel ensures that a party of prostitutes is perceived as an outing of respectable bourgeois ladies (except by the travelling lingerie salesman), and where the movement of the train itself is hardly remarked upon, in contrast to the cumbersome journey by coach. The compartment here is a Metropolitan space transferred from one location to another. What is more important than the novelty and 'pathology' of movement by train is the narrative potential of the interaction between individuals in this 'espace piège' and the exploitation and explosion of the social codes inscribed in second-class railway travel. If prostitution is an issue, it is one which cannot exist in isolation from others.

The banalisation of railway travel reaches its disruptive apotheosis in those stories dealing with commuter rail travel, such as *Le Colporteur* (n.d.; II, 1252-58), whose narrator identifies the drudgery of rail travel with bureaucratic routine, a misery contrasted with the escapist leisure of boating:

[L]e train [des bureaucrates], où je croyais retrouver une odeur de bureau, de cartons verts et de papiers classés, me déposait à Argenteuil. Ma yole m'attendait, toute prête à courir sur l'eau.

(II, 1253).³⁶

³⁶ Maupassant's definitive account of commuter drudgery is to be found in the opening paragraphs of *En Famille* (I, 193-218). In this case, the mode of transport is the tram, but its description shares quite a lot with naturalist description of trains: 'La petite machine, attelée à son wagon, cornait pour écarter les obstacles, crachait sa vapeur, haletait comme une personne essoufflée qui court, et ses pistons faisaient un bruit précipité de jambes de fer en mouvement. La lourde chaleur d'une fin de journée d'été tombait sur la route d'où s'élevait, bien qu'aucune brise ne soufflât, une poussière blanche, crayeuse, opaque, suffocante et chaude, qui se collait sur la peau moite, emplissait les yeux, entraînait dans les poumons'. The passengers are nothing if not impotent in the face of their petit-bourgeois economic predicament: 'Leurs faces inquiètes et tristes disaient encore les soucis domestiques, les incessants besoins d'argent, les anciennes espérances définitivement déçues; car tous appartenaient à cette armée de pauvres diables râpés qui végètent économiquement dans une chétive maison de plâtre, avec une plate-bande pour jardin, au milieu de cette campagne à dépotoirs qui borde Paris' (I, 193).

Confronted one night with the eponymous *colporteur*, the narrator remarks upon the criminal potential of such an encounter in terms of the journalistic narratives which engender paranoia among commuters:

On n'invente pas ainsi, rien que pour amuser les lecteurs, toute cette litanie d'arrestations et de méfaits variés dont sont pleines les colonnes confiées aux reporters.

(II, 1254).

If, however, Duroy's initiation into the world of the *reporter* in *Bel-Ami* (Part I, Chs. III-IV, discussed below) is anything to go by, it would seem that the precise opposite is the case; indeed, the narrator of *Le Colporteur* is blinded by *reportages* to the fact that his new friend's wife is prostituting herself, mistaking the invitation back to his home as an attempt to lure him into a criminal ambush.

This narrator is, like many of the protagonists in the stories discussed, a victim of bogus, 'hysterical' narratives about rail travel rather than of crime, of technological catastrophe, of exposure to prostitution or to vain seducers. In fact, what the *contes* discussed confirm is that rail travel, as well as being particularly appropriate to the short-story genre, is further exploited as a means of subverting the narratives it generates. The compartment in particular provides an ideal forum for secondary narration. The stops and starts of the train allow narrators, *narrataires* and other characters to enter and leave the narrative as and when required. Additionally, however, the compartment is a privileged locus of ironisation, in which bogus tales about the very medium facilitating narrative, as informed by Larousse and popular journalism, are undermined and shown to be part of a generalised *Doxa* of 'hysteria'. Not only are hearsay myths about mechanical disaster and violent crime subverted, so that rail travel is dedramatised, they are also closely paralleled by themes of seduction, prostitution and reproduction, which often turn up instead of one

another, derailing the narrative-generated expectations of narrators, protagonists and perhaps readers, while at the same time revealing how the late nineteenth-century imagination persists, hysterically, in being unable to separate questions of sexuality from the fear of uncontrollable female mobility and the notion of the migratory womb.

It is not the case, however, that all of Maupassant's *contes* featuring railway travel deal with petit bourgeois 'impotence' of the type so far described, in order to subvert the particular branch of the *Doxa* rooted in *faits divers*. If many of Maupassant's *contes*, like the *fait divers* in Barthes's understanding, deal with the decontextualised presentation of events which remain *unexplained* (where, despite the availability of rational explanations, either these are silenced or irrational explanations are chosen by narrators and protagonists), other short fiction deals with phenomena which are *unexplainable* in the positivist, rational terms of engagement offered by the modern world (terms which are no less informed by the *Doxa* of scientific Progress).³⁷ This distinction is perhaps approachable in terms of that identified by Barthes between 'l'Impuissance' and 'la Peur', which constitute 'les deux grandes figures séculaires de la défaite'.³⁸ Whereas the former is particularly relevant to Maupassant's derisive treatment of the petite bourgeoisie, as evidenced in the *contes* discussed above, the latter is characteristic rather of *contes* exploring supernatural themes, which constitute a distinct sub-category (examples include *Le Horla*, *La Peur*, *Sur l'Eau*). Such fiction, according to Barthes, is characterised by 'un aspect pathologique', where an unknown and unnameable power is linked with illness as

³⁷ See Roland Barthes, 'Structure du fait divers' (1962), in *Essais Critiques* (1964), in Barthes, *Œuvres complètes*, op. cit., I, 1165-1375 (pp. 1309-16). '[E]n fait divers, contrairement au roman, un crime sans cause est plus inexplicable qu'inexplicable' (p. 1312). Although the opposition here is one between the *fait divers* and the novel (and one we shall return to in due course), the distinction between the unexplained and the unexplainable in relation to different categories of *conte* ('*contes d'Impuissance*' and '*contes de Peur*', as it were) is applicable in the present context.

³⁸ Barthes, 'Maupassant et la physique du malheur', op. cit., p. 534.

psychological as it is physiological. In the context of railway travel, a key text is *La Peur* (1884; II, 198-205).³⁹ Here the train serves as the context for paranoid introspection on the inexplicable, and at the same time is, literally, the vehicle for cholera, which, far from being an empirically observable medical phenomenon, is personified as an expression of supernatural evil. Fear of it is sparked by a fleeting vision of two men standing at a fire in a clearing ('Ce fut tout à coup comme une apparition fantastique'), witnessed from a train which 'filait à toute vapeur, dans les ténèbres', and in which 'on sentait fortement le phénol'. The vision's instantaneity (a result of the rapid movement of the train) is what ensures its inexplicability, and leads to fearful reflection, and an interchange (interrupted by a recollection of Flaubert and Turgenev, and the latter's treatment of 'l'inconnu voilé') between the narrator and the other occupant of the carriage, who explicitly links the train's circulation with that of cholera before embarking on a disquisition on its supernatural essence:

'Tenez, monsieur, nous assistons à un spectacle curieux et terrible: cette invasion du choléra!

'Vous sentez le phénol dont ces wagons sont empoisonnés, c'est qu'il est là quelque part.

'Il faut voir Toulon en ce moment. Allez, on sent bien qu'il est là, Lui. Et ce n'est pas la peur d'une maladie qui affole les gens. Le choléra c'est autre chose, c'est l'Invisible, c'est un fléau d'autrefois, des temps passés, une sorte d'Esprit malfaisant qui revient et qui nous étonne autant qu'il nous épouvante, car il appartient, semble-t-il, aux âges disparus.

'Les médecins me font rire avec leur microbe. Ce n'est pas un insecte qui terrifie les hommes au point de les faire sauter par les fenêtres; c'est le *choléra*, l'être inexprimable et terrible venu du fond de l'Orient. [...]

(II, 204)

Rather than being a phenomenon which can be relegated by scientific explanation to a bygone age, cholera can now be transmitted by the emblem of technological progress, the train. Science, technology, 'chemins de fer' in the euphoric terms of the Laroussian *Doxa* (the same one which pessimistically trots out the anecdotal horrors of railway travel), are

³⁹ As distinct from the better known story of the same name (1882; I, 600-06).

not the saviours of humanity from age-old difficulties besetting the human condition; science cannot explain everything. Now, while inexplicability is something which is proclaimed intradiegetically here, leaving the protagonists' discourse open to derision by the text, such derision does not occur as in the *contes* discussed previously; this is primarily because the explicit subject for discussion here is fear itself, rather than the 'vanité sociale' prompted and complicated by petit-bourgeois *impuissance* which Barthes claims is the target for the other type of *conte*.⁴⁰ In *La Peur*, as in other *contes* which we might term *fantastiques*, there may well be a rational explanation for phenomena, but the sense of inexplicability on the part of protagonists is not presented as an entirely irrational one.⁴¹ This *conte* is a meditation on the inadequacy of reason and science as means of explaining a vital part of human experience. Even if science can explain cholera, it cannot explain fear. And as for the railway, its fallibility lies in its very efficiency; it is the inadvertent carrier of disease as much as it is the synonym of civilisation.

Maupassant is not the only author to explore these concerns. Marcel Schwob, for instance, in *Le Train 081* (1889), presents the same *Peur* in the same terms of reference: unsettling visions from the train, the unknowable, and the transmissibility of cholera by the ultimate technological symbol of the age of scientific progress which might be expected to have eradicated it. One of the first observations of the narrator of this tale – 'qui ai fait le dur service de mécanicien sur la ligne de P.-L.-M' – echoes the fears discussed in the previous chapter of humanity being overridden by the animalistic aspects of technology:

⁴⁰ Barthes, 'Maupassant et la physique du malheur', op. cit., p. 536.

⁴¹ Martin Calder's observation on *Le Horla* could easily be applied to the present context: 'Whether *Le Horla* is a tale of madness or of the supernatural (or possibly both) is an enigma which the carefully constructed ambiguities of the text render irresolvable. Whether the [diarist-narrator] remains sane, and becomes increasingly enslaved to a foreign will, or whether he becomes increasingly insane, and perceives alien forces only in his own deranged hallucinations, is a hermeneutic circle which cannot be closed'. Martin Calder, 'Something in the Water: Self as Other in Guy de Maupassant's *Le Horla*: A Barthesian Reading', *French Studies*, 52 (1998), 42-57 (p. 42).

‘sur les machines on s’abêtit’.⁴² His preoccupation at the time of the events narrated, 1865, is the cholera epidemic of that year, and it is closely connected with his job: ‘l’idée de voiturier la maladie me tourmentait beaucoup. Sûr, elle devait gagner Marseille: elle arriverait à Paris par le rapide’. His remark at the lack of a communication-cord mechanism at that time is not made in relation to the possibility of mechanical catastrophe, but at the consequent inability of anyone brought down by cholera to alert anyone: ‘je savais que si un voyageur était pris de cette peste d’Asie qui vous étouffe en une heure, il mourait sans secours, et que je ramènerais à Paris, en gare de Lyon, son cadavre bleu’.⁴³ The central event of the story, ‘la grande terreur de ma vie’ mentioned in the opening line, is the appearance, one night at the height of the epidemic (‘il faisait noir comme dans un four’) of another train, its number, 081, mirroring that of the train the narrator is driving on the Nuits St Georges-Dijon stretch of the Marseilles-Paris line, near his family home. In fact, the train turns out to be a mirror image of his. At the beckoning of the other train’s driver, he edges his way down the footplate, at which point the apparently supernatural quality of his experience becomes clear: ‘je sus que j’en faisais autant’, and when the door of wagon A.A.F. 2551 opens of its own accord, ‘je sentais que la même scène se produisait dans *mon* train’. On unveiling the face of the man lying in the compartment, to find blue markings, ‘je reconnus aussi que j’avais devant moi *mon frère et qu’il était mort du choléra*’.⁴⁴ On arrival in Dijon, after what appears to have been an out-of-body (or out-of-mind) experience for the engineer, his brother is found dead from cholera in train 180. Given that his brother has spent several years in China, where ‘les Yeux-Tirés l’avaient gardé pour leur mener des machines à vapeur’, and the pestilential associations of the fear inherent in

⁴² Marcel Schwob, *Le Train 081* (1889), in *Cœur double* [first publ. Paris: Ollendorff, 1891] (Toulouse: Ombres, 1996), pp. 49-54 (p. 49).

⁴³ Schwob, *Le Train 081*, op. cit., p. 50.

⁴⁴ Schwob, *Le Train 081*, op. cit., p. 53, emphasis in original.

prevalent cultural attitudes about the 'Orient', what has transpired is not particularly surprising.⁴⁵ But what is central both to the event itself, and to the brother's experience abroad, is the railway, which appears clearly to be a vector of disease ('le lendemain [...]. le choléra s'est abattu sur Paris, après l'arrivée du rapide de Marseille'), as well as a locus of supernatural fear and suggestion: the story ends with the remark that 'le choléra bleu est venu de Marseille à Paris par le train 081', that is, as Peter Cogman points out, 'not on the "train 180", the one he was driving'.⁴⁶ As in *La Peur*, Civilization is powerless in the face of the inexplicable, and indeed is responsible for communicating its pathological representative, just as the driver himself is powerless, in that 'it is [...] the *other* who acts, and he (the narrator) who seems to function as his mirror image'.⁴⁷ Schwob's other 'railway story', *L'Homme voilé* (1890), exploits both the supernatural and the *fait divers* in its account of a murder in a railway carriage. The authorship of the murder remains unclear: it is either witnessed or in fact carried out by the narrator, whose delicate psychological state is aggravated by thoughts of 'l'assassin Jud, qui tuait, la nuit, dans des wagons de premières et qu'on n'a jamais repris après son évasion'.⁴⁸ Fear inspired by a figure pervading popular culture transmutes into the narrator's calm and relaxed abandonment of his will, in the context of relentless and monotonous movement, to that of the 'homme voilé' who has suddenly and mysteriously appeared in the compartment, and who proceeds to slit the throat of the other passenger, before disappearing to leave the narrator standing red-handed (or rather, red-faced: 'ma figure barrée de caillots de sang') at the door as the

⁴⁵ Schwob, *Le Train 081*, op. cit., p. 49.

⁴⁶ Schwob, *Le Train 081*, op. cit., p. 54.

⁴⁷ Cogman, 'Marcel Schwob and the Railway Story', pp. 31-32, emphasis in original.

⁴⁸ Schwob, *L'Homme voilé* (1890), in *Cœur double*, pp. 79-84. The mysterious and elusive Charles Jud was thought responsible for the notorious murder (in a railway compartment) of the judge Poinot in 1860. See Cogman, 'Marcel Schwob and the Railway Story', p. 36.

train stops.⁴⁹ The story is clearly the account of a condemned man who still claims to be unaware of what actually happened, prefaced by the observation that ‘certains accidents de la vie humaine sont aussi artistement combinés par le hasard ou les lois de la nature que l’invention la plus démoniaque’.⁵⁰ For Peter Cogman, the authorship of the murder is not the central issue, just as, in both stories, neither is ‘choosing between a supernatural event and a rational explanation’.⁵¹ Rather, as far as *L’Homme voilé* is concerned, ‘one could ask oneself if Schwob’s main aim has been just to set up an ultimately unresolvable puzzle about what happened “out there”, in the external world’. The key factor is the passivity which has come about in the narrator internally.⁵² External causes are nevertheless to be taken into account, most notably the enclosure of the compartment and the repetitive motion of the train. Both Schwob tales express, in fact, according to Cogman, ‘the contemporary ambivalence about the railway as both symbol of progress and locus of anxiety [...], a demonstration of man’s mastery of nature but a place where the individual is powerless and where primitive instincts surface’.⁵³ That is, without entirely negating rational explanations, they express the experience of fear and of the apparently supernatural. In this, as with *La Peur*, they are distinct from Maupassant’s *contes* of petit-bourgeois *impuissance* in that they explore the psychology of fear rather than the group psychology and epistemology of a class, but at the same time they call the confident assertions of the *Doxa* of Progress into question. If *faits divers* are present, as in *L’Homme voilé*, they are present in terms of their psychological rather than sociological effects. their capacity to impact on the internal world of the individual rather than their intradiegetically

⁴⁹ Schwob, *L’Homme voilé*, op. cit., p. 84.

⁵⁰ Schwob, *L’Homme voilé*, op. cit., p. 79.

⁵¹ Cogman, ‘Marcel Schwob and the Railway Story’, p. 31.

⁵² Cogman, ‘Marcel Schwob and the Railway Story’, p. 27.

⁵³ Cogman, ‘Marcel Schwob and the Railway Story’, p. 38.

assumed capacity to explain phenomena. In these stories, there is too much that cannot be explained. The information provided in them is partial, open-ended.

The *fait divers*, on the other hand, is, in Barthes's terms, 'une information totale'. And it is in this sense that most of the Maupassant *contes* dealing with railway travel might be understood. Within the parameters imposed by the text on intradiegetic narrators and protagonists, explanations are withheld, unsought rather than unavailable. This totality of information available within such confines makes such *contes* similar, in terms of form, to the *faits divers* which the texts ironise. For Barthes:

Au niveau de la lecture, tout est donné dans un fait divers; ses circonstances, ses causes, son passé, son issue; sans durée et sans contexte, il constitue un être immédiat, total, qui ne renvoie, du moins formellement, à rien d'implicite; c'est en cela qu'il s'apparente à la nouvelle et au conte, et non plus au roman.⁵⁴

In Maupassant, there is plenty which is implicit, but this is always in the knowingly ironic text as a whole rather than in any utterance within it. But from a naïve perspective, what Barthes says holds good formally. In any case, this opposition between short form and novel parallels very closely what Barthes says about Maupassant in particular, in relation to the distinction between the mechanical and the organic. It is difficult to establish a direct comparison between Maupassant's novels and short stories in the context of travel and transport, since none of the novels are actually explicitly about this subject. This is perhaps implicit in the very distinction made between the two genres. Transport and travel do have a certain presence in Maupassant's longer fiction, but they do so as an organic part of a much more complex whole, rather than a totalising mechanical presence. *Bel-Ami* provides an illustration.

⁵⁴ Barthes, 'Structure du fait divers', op. cit., p. 1310.

In Maupassant's 1885 novel, when Madeleine Duroy, formerly Forestier, remarks to her new husband during their honeymoon train journey to Rouen that 'les baisers en wagon ne valent rien', she may well, apparently previously having engaged in locomotive carnality, be attempting to dispel a widely held belief (one apparently shared by Duroy) that there is something especially exciting about such activity, but her comment is more important in the context of the dynamic of their relationship elaborated over the course of the novel.⁵⁵ The ultimately unsatisfying nature of the 'accouplement violent et maladroit' which ensues, leaving them 'un peu déçus tous deux, las et tendres encore, jusqu'à ce que le sifflet du train annonçât une gare prochaine', has more to do with the circumstances of their marriage than with the deceptively seductive context of the railway carriage (p. 354). The account of this relationship, as of Duroy's many liaisons, is in fact (to reemploy Barthes's formulation) 'l'histoire d'une dégradation', itself the result of another (her husband's agonising demise), and is counterpoised against his vaulting ambition; this journey represents the beginning of the deflation of an ideal, fulfilling a role not unlike that of the journey undertaken on the *Ville-de-Montereau* in *L'Éducation sentimentale*. After initial 'épanchements' uttered to offstay the creeping 'gêne' which makes its presence felt the minute they leave the gare St Lazare, it becomes clear, although Duroy does eventually have his way with his bride (to their mutual dissatisfaction), that something is in the process of dissipation. This is reflected in the environment through which the train moves, depicted in a manner which arguably alludes to Flaubert's novel:

La nuit venait doucement, enveloppant d'ombre transparente, comme d'un crêpe léger, la grande campagne qui s'étendait à droite. Le train longeait la Seine; et les jeunes gens se mirent à regarder dans le fleuve, déroulé comme un large ruban de métal poli à côté de la voie, des reflets rouges, des taches tombées du ciel que le soleil en s'en allant avait frotté de

⁵⁵ Maupassant, *Bel-Ami* (1885), in *Romans*, ed. Louis Forestier (Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1987), pp. 195-480 (p. 353). This edition hereinafter referred to by page number in the text.

pourpre et de feu. Ces lueurs s'éteignaient peu à peu, devenaient foncées, s'assombrissant tristement.

(p. 353).⁵⁶

Elsewhere in *Bel-Ami*, the train is part of the environment. On one level, its presence is a banal one; it is a feature of everyday urban life in the late nineteenth century. At a reception early in the novel hosted by Duroy's friend and protector Forestier, 'le grand projet du chemin de fer métropolitain' is an accessible subject for after-dinner conversation, on which anyone and everyone can hold forth, 'chacun ayant une quantité de choses à dire sur la lenteur des communications dans Paris' (pp. 218-19). On another, more sophisticated, level, the railway is an intrusive backdrop to Duroy's burgeoning journalistic creativity, with occasional bestial and anthropomorphic features. If, in a sense, this modern environment has supplanted 'nature', its 'natural' features are nevertheless discernible. The 'abîme profond' to which 'l'immense tranchée du chemin de fer de l'Ouest' overlooked by Duroy's room is likened might be read as nemesis of the mountain gorge stereotypically inspiring Romantic creativity, an infernal pit inhabited by blind, unthinking beasts and tortured souls:

Au-dessous de lui, dans le fond du trou sombre, trois signaux rouges immobiles avaient l'air de gros yeux de bête; et plus loin on en voyait d'autres, et encore d'autres, encore plus loin. À tout instant des coups de sifflet prolongés ou courts passaient dans la nuit [...]. Ils avaient des modulations comme des appels de voix. Un d'eux se rapprochait, poussant toujours son cri plaintif qui grandissait de seconde en seconde [...]; et Duroy regarda le long chapelet des wagons s'engouffrer sous le tunnel.

Puis il se dit: 'Allons, au travail.'

(pp. 222-23)

⁵⁶ Compare *L'Éducation sentimentale*, p. 1: 'les deux berges [...] filèrent comme deux larges rubans que l'on déroule'. In Flaubert's novel, the 'rubans' of the banks are viewed from the moving perspective of the boat: in *Bel-Ami*, the 'ruban' of the Seine is viewed from the train. That Flaubert is being alluded to here is supported further by the reference to 'saint Antoine, patron des Tentations' in the previous paragraph, a reference picked up on by Louis Forestier (p. 1403 n. 2). It is to be borne in mind also that Duroy's native village, Canteleu, is adjacent to Croisset.

No work is forthcoming, however. The work which has been commissioned for *La Vie française* is to be an account of his time in North Africa, the exoticism of which contrasts with his mundane surroundings, which reek of ‘la misère honteuse, la misère en garni de Paris’. Indeed, the railway is a complement to this drudgery; Duroy, at this stage, as he reports to his former comrade-in-arms (and now successful journalist) Forestier after their chance meeting in the street, is ‘employé aux bureaux du chemin de fer du Nord, à quinze cents francs par an, rien de plus’ (p. 201). Success in journalism is a way out of this dead-end job. Once he begins to imagine how he might, to this end, evoke on paper ‘la physionomie étrange et charmante d’Alger, cette antichambre de l’Afrique mystérieuse et profonde’, he is overcome by ‘impuissance’ and despair at his poverty. His depressive reverie is interrupted by the sound of the railway outside:

[Il] retourna s’accouder à la fenêtre, juste au moment où un train sortait du tunnel avec un bruit subit et violent. Il s’en allait là-bas, à travers les champs et les plaines, vers la mer. Et le souvenir de ses parents entra au cœur de Duroy.

(p. 224).

If he is unable to concentrate on the exoticism of Algeria, the train is able to lead him mentally to the much less exotic surroundings of his family home in Normandy. Here, then, the railway serves as a narrative device allowing his origins to be recounted. These are origins which ultimately he wishes to escape; his overriding ‘désir d’arriver’ is behind his constant daydreaming. However, the same railway which facilitates such reverie wrenches him from it:

Le sifflet strident d’une locomotive qui, sortie toute seule du tunnel, comme un gros lapin de son terrier, et courant à toute vapeur sur les rails, filait vers le garage des machines où elle allait se reposer, le réveilla de son songe.

(p. 225)

Almost as hurriedly as the locomotive turns in for the night, Duroy abandons his work and goes to bed. Very soon, he has to enlist the services of Madeleine Forestier for the completion of his *chroniques*. What Madeleine does, essentially, as she moves briskly to and fro smoking cigarettes and blowing out smoke in the manner of a train, is to remove any exoticism from Duroy's subject-matter, creating an account of Algeria which can be digested by an implied intradiegetic reader:

‘Nous supposons que vous adressez à un ami vos impressions, ce qui vous permet de dire un tas de bêtises, de faire des remarques de toute espèce, d’être naturel et drôle.’
(pp. 229-30)

What she is doing is instructing Duroy in the diegetic workings of the *chronique*, making clear that what is being communicated is not necessarily the sincere and earnest recollection of the *chroniqueur*. Furthermore, the exotic grandeur of ‘travel’ in a mysterious dark continent is forsaken for a banal rehearsal of events in French garrison life, which could take place anywhere. An anecdote about the prescription of ‘vomitif n° 3’ to a soldier is followed by a word of advice to ‘Henry’, the supposed addressee of the letter of which the article takes the form:

‘Eh bien, mon cher, pour atteindre l’Afrique, il faut subir, pendant quarante heures, une autre sorte de vomitif irrésistible, selon la formule de la Compagnie transatlantique...’
(p. 230)

The romance of the sea voyage is thus reduced to the discomfort and tedium of commercialized mass travel.⁵⁷

Mass travel, however, while being a banal backdrop to Duroy's life, also represents

⁵⁷ Furthermore, the reality of Algeria, as portrayed in Part II of the novel, is one of political and financial machinations in the rush for colonial spoils, in which Duroy, now Du Roy, is a major participant.

a way out. The railway in particular is an ambivalent symbol of modernity, representing the opportunities it provides as much as the drudgery of urban life. The perspective which the novel affords of the railway is indeed that of the urban observer, rather than just the passenger. The railway is at the heart of the circulatory network of the economy, and particularly of the word, and, as Duroy transforms himself from railway clerk to society columnist, it aids his rise, both as a journalist and as exploitative ladies' man-about-town. Mme Marelle, for example, to whom Madeleine procures an introduction for Duroy, is the wife of a railway inspector whose absences facilitate their meetings.⁵⁸ On the morning his article is finally published, he goes to the gare Saint-Lazare, 'sachant bien que *La Vie française* y arriverait avant de parvenir dans son quartier' (p. 238). In an economy to which 'circulation' of every kind is central, the railway station is the first point of sale for the press, from which Duroy embarks on an odyssey around various cafés and restaurants, circulating his text. He soon realises also that his name will not be made by sitting around in his room attempting to write memoirs about faraway countries of which potential readers know little (and about which they only want to know in terms of their own experience and prejudices, if Madeleine's judgment is anything to go by), but by first of all circulating through all echelons of Parisian society and honing his skills as a reporter. Rather than writing skills, what are required are 'people skills' which have their own illicit 'economy': 'des procédés inconnus et suspects, des services rendus, toute une contrebande acceptée et consentie'. The railway at this stage ceases to accompany thoughts of mere escape, considered in terms of displacement away from his current situation; the reverie it now accompanies is about the workings of the society in which he is beginning to make his way:

⁵⁸ Duroy first seduces her in 'un fiacre qui roulait' (p. 260), and after decorating his room for her first visit ('pour recevoir sa maîtresse et dissimuler la pauvreté du local'), goes to sleep 'bercé par le sifflet des trains' (p. 264). Subsequent meetings are facilitated by new communications technology, in the form of the telegram.

‘il rêvait souvent le soir, en regardant de sa fenêtre passer les trains, aux procédés qu’il pourrait employer’ (p. 250). That is, journalism, like the railway, is a system, a network. interconnected with other aspects of modern life, rather than an isolated entity which of its own accord can provide a way through a world which must, rather, necessarily be engaged with on its own complex terms.

This is a world in which the new technologies of communication work in banalised unison; when Duroy rushes to Forestier’s death-bed in Cannes, he does so ‘par le rapide de sept heures, après avoir prévenu le ménage de Marelle par un télégramme’ (p. 324). It is in this episode that the unalterable presence of modern technology and the symbolism of mechanical movement are linked most closely to the idea of degradation; in this, the modern technology which has supplanted nature is exploited to illustrate how living beings function, in accordance with nineteenth-century scientific and indeed philosophical ideas. The atmosphere of impending death is intensified by the intrusive regularity of machines; in Forestier’s villa, ‘seul le tic-tac dur d’une horloge troublait le calme des murs de son mouvement mécanique et régulier’ (pp. 328-29). Indeed, modern technology is intrusive to the point that it appears immersed in nature, at least to Forestier and Duroy as they look out to sea:

Au milieu de la vaste baie, on apercevait, en effet, une demi-douzaine de gros navires qui ressemblaient à des rochers couverts de ramures. Ils étaient bizarres, difformes, énormes, avec des excroissances, des tours, des éperons s’enfonçant dans l’eau comme pour aller prendre racine sous la mer.

On ne comprenait pas que cela pût se déplacer, remuer, tant ils semblaient lourds et attachés au fond. [...].

Et un grand trois-mâts passait auprès d’eux pour gagner le large, toutes ses voiles déployées blanches et joyeuses. Il était gracieux et joli auprès des monstres de guerre, des monstres de fer, des vilains monstres accroupis sur l’eau.

(p. 330)

While these iron ships might appear monstrous and threatening in comparison with the grace of sail, their perception in this way is perhaps indicative of a sense that the supposedly mysterious functioning of technologically advanced machines actually has close parallels in nature. Indeed, it is based on natural processes, albeit sophisticated ones. What appears frightening is this very closeness to nature, the fact that these vessels are animated; machines may in a sense be interchangeable with beasts or monsters, and the next step is interchangeability with humanity. If these 'monstres' are, like the Voreux in *Germinal*, 'accroupis', ready to pounce as it were, it is because of a sense of the inevitability of the replacement of old life by new life, even if this new 'life' is in some sense monstrous.⁵⁹ If these machines are perceived as in some sense living, and implanted in the organic world, the dying human organism is similarly presented as decaying mechanically. As Forestier dies, his last gestures take the form of 'un mouvement lent, continu, et régulier' of his hands. His death prompts a meditation, focalized by Duroy, on the nature of living beings and ultimately of the universe:

[C]hacun porte en soi le désir fiévreux et irréalisable de l'éternité, chacun est une sorte d'univers dans l'univers, et chacun s'anéantit bientôt complètement dans le fumier des germes nouveaux. Les plantes, les bêtes, les hommes, les étoiles, les mondes, tout s'anime, puis meurt pour se transformer. Et jamais un être ne revient, insecte, homme ou planète.
(p. 335)

This represents an acceptance of human limitations, and an implicit acceptance of the entropy of the universe. Battleships, trains and other machines, despite the temptation to see them as supernatural, are part of this universe, indeed anchored in nature. To see them

⁵⁹ These two novels were written more or less contemporaneously. *Bel-Ami*, according to Forestier (*Romans*, pp. 1339-40) was composed between the summer of 1884 and February 1885, appearing serially in *Gil Blas* between 6 April and 30 May 1885; *Germinal* was 'Commencé le 2 avril 1884' (Bibliothèque Nationale, Nouvelles acquisitions françaises, 10305, f° 1) and 'Fini le 23 janvier 85' (B.N., N.a.f., 10306, f° 835), and appeared in *Gil Blas* between 26 November 1884 and 25 February 1885 (see *Les Rougon-Macquart*, op. cit., III, 1808).

otherwise is to fall victim to the same illusion that human life is somehow eternal. If they are 'vilains monstres accroupis', it is perhaps to the extent that they are squatting in order to participate in the excretion of 'le fumier des germes nouveaux', in a natural cycle which regenerates itself through degeneration over time.⁶⁰ Time and its imperatives are the only constants; after Forestier's death, 'on n'entendait que le balancier de la pendule qui battait sur la cheminée son tic-tac métallique et régulier' (p. 337). And after the funeral, public transport continues as normal, adhering to its regular timetable. Its continuity is reinforced by the use of the present tense: Duroy 'voulut prendre le rapide de Paris qui passe à une heure et demie' (p. 341). From this train, as it moves away, Duroy blows a kiss to Madeleine, stationary on the platform, whose return of the gesture is half-hearted. This unease, revisited in the train to Rouen, comes to characterise their ensuing marriage, which ends in infidelity and divorce, plagued initially by Duroy's jealous obsession with his deceased friend, whose mortality he finds hard to accept, despite earlier having apparently arrived at a metaphysical position resolving his understanding of life and death. However, once this position is complemented by its counterpart, a realisation that 'le monde est aux forts' (p. 374), this jealousy becomes transformed into ruthless egotism, and his differences with the late Forestier are put aside. Likewise, instead of falling prey to jealousy over the Comte de Vaudrec, his wife's elderly friend who leaves her his estate, he exploits the potential for public supposition that he was her lover by arranging for half the legacy to fall to himself. Instead of being adversely affected by death, therefore, he transcends it to his advantage. His story is, after all, one of transcendence, as much of regeneration as of degeneration. His success is due to his constant self-reinvention, aided by his acceptance of the modern world on its own terms, and by the resolution of apparent contradictions

⁶⁰ For this scatological reading of 'accroupis' I am indebted to David Bellos, 'From the Bowels of the Earth: An Essay on *Germinal*', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 15 (1979), 35-45 (p. 38).

between that world and the one it has supplanted. Technology, while far from being central to the novel, is related organically to its main themes, and is presented where it does appear in terms which emblemize the vital coexistence of the old and the new on which Duroy thrives.⁶¹ This is hinted at as he looks out from his hotel window in Rouen, prior to his conquering return to Paris as Du Roy (an aristocratic handle paradoxically enhancing his standing in a bourgeois capitalist system):

La vue du port, du large fleuve plein de navires aux mâts légers, de vapeurs trapus, que des machines tournantes vidaient à grand bruit sur les quais, le remua, bien qu'il connût cela depuis longtemps. Et il s'écria:

'Bigre, que c'est beau!'

(p. 355)

If the vision from his Paris room of technological monstrosity was at first a grim one, the coexistence of the technologically degenerate with the graceful manages to move him to admiration, even if this is ultimately self-regard at the growing capacity for regenerative transcendence in the face of degradation which will ensure his fitness for survival in the struggle for life. *Bel-Ami* is on several counts 'l'histoire d'une dégradation', but the 'catastrophes' in it (Duroy's initial penury, the death of Forestier, the collapse of the marriage) are organically linked with Duroy's ambition and success. Transport and travel constitute a symbolic part of this fictional organism, and what they symbolise is a modern world which must be dedramatised, divested 'de sa robe de poésie' (p. 375) if it is to be exploited to the full.

Pierre et Jean presents degradation of a somewhat different stamp. Unlike Duroy,

⁶¹ Attempts to conjoin the supernatural with modern technology are ridiculed in the novel, most notably at the exhibition of 'la toile de Karl Marcowitch: *Jésus marchant sur les flots éclairée à la lumière électrique*' (p. 433), which displays euphoric reverence for Progress much in the same way as does Pellerin's painting depicting 'la République, ou le Progrès, ou la Civilisation, sous la figure de Jésus-Christ conduisant une locomotive' (*L'Éducation sentimentale*, p. 302).

who exploits the potentially eyebrow-raising quality of an inheritance to his own ends. rather than allowing himself to become plagued by jealousy, Pierre Roland becomes obsessed with the doubts raised over his mother's fidelity by his brother Jean's inheritance from a family friend; his restless obsession is linked to his psychological and professional decline. Again, as in *Bel-Ami*, modern technology and travel are not the work's principal subject-matter, but their presence contributes organically to its overall meaning, as part of what is referred to in the novel's preface as 'le groupement adroit de petits faits constants d'où se dégagera le sens définitif de l'œuvre'.⁶² The story's setting in Le Havre immediately makes discussion of modern transport inevitable, but this is far from circumstantial, in that modern maritime technology is relentlessly linked throughout the novel, by means of anthropomorphic representation, to the essential restlessness of Pierre. Such anthropomorphism, moreover, is very often actively sought by Pierre. Pierre's willingly pathetic fallaciousness, attributing supernatural and monstrous as well as human qualities to ship, tug, lighthouse and harbour, is perhaps the most extreme manifestation of a misplaced sense of awe in relation to modern transport, which, as he comes too late to learn, is as much a source of tedium as of exotic escape.

Such awe is shared by others, if only as enthusiasm for modern seafaring. As the novel opens Roland, who has relocated to Le Havre on account of 'un amour immodéré de la navigation' (p. 718) – inherited by Pierre, it transpires – has taken his family on what appears to be as much a ship-spotting outing as a fishing trip. His enthusiastic interrogation of the horizon, 'le bras allongé vers le nord', yields a vision, literally of a dark cloud, which hints that the calm of the family's new life is about to be disturbed:

⁶² Maupassant, 'Le Roman' (1887), preface to *Pierre et Jean* (1888), in *Romans*, pp. 701-803 (p. 707).

Sur la mer plate, tendue comme une étoffe bleue, immense, luisante, aux reflets d'or et de feu, s'élevait là-bas, dans la direction indiquée, un nuage noirâtre sur le ciel rose. Et on apercevait, au-dessous, le navire qui semblait tout petit de si loin.

(p. 722)⁶³

The ship here foreshadows the crisis about to disrupt the domestic harmony of the Roland ménage. When the *Prince-Albert* finally arrives, 'à toute vapeur', it is depicted in anthropomorphic terms: 'ses deux tambours jaunes' are 'ronds comme des joues'. Its 'roues rapides' bestow on it 'un air de hâte, un air de courrier pressé; et l'avant tout droit coupait la mer en soulevant deux lames minces et transparentes qui glissaient le long des bords' (p. 725). This embodiment of restlessness appears also to foreshadow, in its cutting through the water, the division between Pierre and Jean. More menacingly anthropomorphic is the depiction of the harbour, scene of a variety of forms of frenetic movement:

Et on voyait d'autres navires, coiffés aussi de fumée, accourant de tous les points de l'horizon vers la jetée courte et blanche qui les avalait comme une bouche, l'un après l'autre. Et les barques de pêche et les grands voiliers aux mâtures légères glissant sur le ciel, trainés par d'imperceptibles remorqueurs, arrivaient tous, vite ou lentement, vers cet ogre dévorant, qui, de temps en temps, semblait repu, et rejetait vers la pleine mer une autre flotte de paquebots, de bricks, de goélettes, de trois-mâts chargés de ramures emmêlées. Les steamers hâtifs s'enfuyaient à droite, à gauche, sur le ventre plat de l'Océan, tandis que les bâtiments à voile, abandonnés par les mouches qui les avaient halés, demeuraient immobiles [...].

(p. 725)

Although the taxonomic enumeration of vessels here seems initially to equalise them all, what emerges is a distinction between steam-driven craft and sailboats. The distinction here contrasts with that in the harbour in Cannes in *Bel-Ami*, in that it is the mechanised boats which are characterised by their mobility, and the wind-driven boats which appear

⁶³ Compare the end of *Une Vie*: 'Rien n'apparaissait sur la voie lointaine. Puis tout à coup [Jeanne] aperçut une tache blanche, une fumée, puis, au-dessous, un point noir qui grandit, accourant à toute vitesse. La grosse machine enfin, ralentissant sa marche, passa, en fronflant, devant Jeanne qui guettait avidement les portières' (p. 193).

stationary, and which blend into the landscape. It is perhaps the case that in the earlier novel the 'trois-mâts' is the graceful symbol of a transcendence which is achieved by Duroy but one which in *Pierre et Jean* is unachievable by Pierre, who finds reality hard to accept and, like the 'steamers hâtifs', lacks any direction in life. Like these boats, superficially part of the same 'flotte' as the others which emerge from the port, he may initially be part of a family, but after the trauma precipitated by the literally 'monstrous' revelation of the true nature of this family, specifically in relation to his mother, it is as if he is reborn into a different existence. Indeed, just as the harbour, far from being a protective haven, is an 'ogre dévorant', Pierre's family becomes the site of an oedipal (castration?) anxiety from which he must escape.

Once the germ of this anxiety is planted by the sudden announcement of Maréchal's legacy to Jean, Pierre begins to experience it without being aware of what it is. Like the ship on the horizon, it is initially almost imperceptible, experienced as 'un petit point douloureux, une de ces presque insensibles meurtrissures dont on ne trouve pas la place, mais qui gênent, fatiguent, attristent, irritent'. It soon manifests itself as an incomprehensible desire to move. Walking towards the port, he interrogates himself as to his immediate destination ('Où irais-je bien?'), but this develops into the much wider question of where he is destined in life, and of the root cause of his malaise: 'il cherchait d'où lui venait cet énervement, ce besoin de mouvement sans avoir envie de rien' (p. 736). Recognising that it may well come from 'l'héritage de Jean', Pierre, in whom 'l'homme sensitif dominait toujours l'homme intelligent', reflects on the emotional rather than rational implications of phenomena (for instance, his jealousy of Jean's money and Mme Rosémilly, rather, at this stage, than precisely why Maréchal should name him as heir). Such self-indulgent reflection is paralleled in his apprehension of the ships in the harbour, which again, despite their superficial similarity, in that they are rationally distinguishable

from one another only by the taxonomy on the 'liste des navires', are, if suitably qualified, invested with exotic qualities:

On attendait des steamers du Brésil, de la Plata, du Chili et du Japon, deux bricks danois, une goélette norvégienne et un vapeur turc, ce qui surprit Pierre autant que s'il avait lu 'un vapeur suisse'; et il aperçut dans une sorte de songe bizarre un grand vaisseau couvert d'hommes en turban [...].

(p. 737)

Likewise, the technology of navigation is invested with supernatural qualities. As Pierre contemplates 'les deux phares électriques du cap de la Hève, semblables à deux cyclopes monstrueux et jumeaux', sending out beams 'pareils aux queues géantes de deux comètes', the *rade* becomes an infinitely extendable symbol of the universe, in which lights become stars. Recognising Jean, he expands to him on his 'désirs fous de partir', which appear rooted in dissatisfaction with the modern industrialised, rational world, in which imagination is a thing of the past:

'Songe que ces petits feux, là-bas, arrivent de tous les coins du monde, des pays aux grandes fleurs et aux belles filles pâles ou cuivrées, des pays aux oiseaux-mouches, aux éléphants, aux lions libres, aux rois nègres, de tous les pays qui sont nos contes de fées à nous qui ne croyons plus à la Chatte blanche ni à la Belle au bois dormant. Ce serait rudement chic de pouvoir s'offrir une promenade par là-bas [...]'.
(p. 738)

But of course, in order to embark on such a 'promenade', "il faudrait de l'argent, beaucoup...". Realising that Jean now has such wealth, he imagines the exotic possibilities open to his brother: 'il pouvait aller où bon lui semblerait, vers les blondes Suédoises ou les brunes Havanaises' (p. 739), which, of course, he has no need to do in that he has Mme Rosémilly and is in a position to be contented with the reality which surrounds him. We soon learn, however, that Pierre's discontentment with civilisation, far from being merely a symptom of the renewed oedipal anxiety precipitated by the legacy, is much more deep-

rooted; he has a history of being unable to fit into conventional career paths. Each attempt at seeking fortune has lasted 'jusqu'au premier obstacle, jusqu'au premier échec qui le jetait dans une voie nouvelle' (p. 742). At heart, his recurrent failure is due to an inability to reconcile sentiment and intelligence, between which he has set up a distinction. He may claim to respect nothing in the world except 'le savoir et l'intelligence', but because of this he cannot come to terms with the fallibility of human beings, which the science of which he is a would-be high priest has itself decreed, and which is ultimately emblemized by his mother's earlier infidelity. His apparent belief that rational human beings such as himself are superior is paradoxically reflected in his attributing supernatural forces to inanimate objects, such as the fishing boat, which, in his capable hands, appears 'animée d'une vie propre, de la vie des barques, poussée par une force mystérieuse cachée en elle' (p. 758).

Pierre's anthropomorphism reaches its peak while he is wandering around Le Havre obsessively contemplating his growing suspicion that Jean is Maréchal's son. Trying to resist the 'terreur' of this prospect, he seeks a place where he can be 'immobile'. Returning to the harbour, he hears 'une plainte lamentable et sinistre, pareille au meuglement d'un taureau' (p. 763). His belief that he is linked to 'le cri des navires perdus dans la brume' is unequivocal: a shudder is caused by 'ce cri de détresse, qu'il croyait avoir jeté lui-même' (p. 764). Further approaches to the uncomfortable truth result in participation in direct communication with the plaintive sirens:

Sa détresse, à cette pensée, devint si déchirante qu'il poussa un gémissement, une de ces courtes plaintes arrachées à la gorge par les douleurs trop vives. Et soudain, comme si elle l'eût entendu, comme si elle l'eût compris et lui eût répondu, la sirène de la jetée hurla tout près de lui. Sa clameur de monstre surnaturel, plus retentissante que le tonnerre, rugissement sauvage et formidable fait pour dominer les voix du vent et des vagues, se répandit dans les ténèbres [...].

Alors, à travers la brume, proches ou lointains, des cris pareils s'élevèrent de nouveau dans la nuit. Ils étaient effrayants, ces appels poussés par les grands paquebots aveugles.

(pp. 766-67)

Pierre's self-identification with these supernatural monsters is unsurprising. They are representatives of a technology which has become monstrous in its apparent supplanting of nature. Nature, however, far from being ontologically distinct from technology, is in fact its scientific basis. Believing himself to be a man of science and reason, he relegates the source of his emotional disquiet to the purely emotional realm, rather than accepting it as the result of a natural act.

If he refuses to contemplate the question of his and his brother's origins in a fully rational sense, this is also the case with ships. Pierre listens to the exchange of hoarse cries between harbourmaster and pilot, and rather than seeing the information imparted on vessels as being a necessary part of a functional taxonomy, which exists to provide distinctions between craft otherwise indistinguishable from one another, he imagines exotic surroundings for them. On hearing that the Santa-Lucia is registered in Naples,

Pierre devant ses yeux troublés crut apercevoir le panache de feu du Vésuve tandis qu'au pied du volcan, des lucioles voltigeaient dans les bosquets d'orangers de Sorrente ou de Castellamare! Que de fois il avait rêvé de ces noms familiers, comme s'il en connaissait les paysages. Oh! s'il avait pu partir, tout de suite, n'importe où, et ne jamais revenir, ne jamais écrire, ne jamais laisser savoir ce qu'il était devenu. Mais non, il fallait rentrer, rentrer dans la maison paternelle [...].

(pp. 768-69)

Such daydreams, then, indulged by 'sa déraison vagabonde', inevitably reorient themselves to the question of his own origins. These modern ships, 'sortant l'un après l'autre de l'ombre impénétrable' are essentially the same the world over, but Pierre cannot accept this, just as, ultimately, he cannot accept that his mother is biologically a woman like any other. 'Sa mère avait fait comme les autres, voilà tout! Comme les autres? non!' (p. 776). For Robert Lethbridge, 'it is not the least of the text's ironies that Pierre is unable to

reconcile his scientific knowledge that “toute une race descend directement du même baiser” [p. 771] with the emotional reality “que sa mère s’était livrée aux caresses d’un homme” [p. 823]’. Furthermore, we are left with ‘the paradox that the character most obsessed by the truth is himself most prey to his illusions’.⁶⁴ Indeed, Pierre everywhere attempts to create mystery where there is only banality.

Jean’s attitude, on the other hand, is much more concrete and practical. After the revelation of his origins, which ultimately does not disturb him as much as his brother, he realises that a solution has to be found in relation to Pierre’s presence in the family. His approach is undertaken from ‘un point de vue presque professionnel, comme s’il eût réglé les relations futures de clients après une catastrophe d’ordre moral’ (p. 810). In accordance with his sense of practicality, if not expediency, his response to the noises of ships prompts action rather than emotion. ‘il désespérait de découvrir une solution pratique, quand le sifflet d’un vapeur entrant au port sembla lui jeter une réponse en lui suggérant une idée’ (p. 811). The idea in question is that Pierre become a doctor on a transatlantic steamer, which prospect Jean has approached from all the practical angles, rather than, as Pierre might, in terms of satisfying ‘un besoin de fuir intolérable’ (p. 813). Indeed, Jean’s practicality extends to talking up the life on the ocean wave (whether or not he is convinced of its alleged attractiveness) in order to impress his (or rather, Pierre’s) father, whose ‘manie nautique’ (p. 751) is easily flattered: half the year is spent in ‘deux villes superbes’, New York and (improbably) Le Havre, ‘et le reste en mer avec des gens charmants’. Further talk of the type of remuneration a captain (not a doctor) might enjoy is greeted by ‘un “bigre!” suivi d’un sifflement’ on Roland’s part, ‘qui témoignaient d’un profond respect pour la somme et pour le capitaine’ (p. 814).

⁶⁴ Robert Lethbridge, *Maupassant: Pierre et Jean* (London: Grant and Cutler, 1984), p. 49.

Once appointed as doctor on the *Lorraine*, after the necessary recommendations have been provided, Pierre finds 'sa souffrance adoucie un peu par la pensée de ce départ et de cette vie calme, toujours bercée par l'eau qui roule. toujours errante, toujours fuyante' (p. 821). However, he soon senses, on visiting another ship's doctor, 'pour s'informer [...] de tous les détails de sa vie nouvelle', that the life which awaits him is anything but calm. This does not come from anything Dr Pirette, 'qui ressemblait à son frère', may have to say (which is not related) but from the menacingly chaotic atmosphere of the ship:

On entendait dans les profondeurs sonores de l'immense bâtiment une grande agitation confuse et continue, où la chute des marchandises entassées dans les cales se mêlait aux pas, aux voix, au mouvement des machines chargeant les caisses, aux sifflets des contremaîtres et à la rumeur des chaînes traînées ou enroulées sur les treuils par l'haleine rauque de la vapeur qui faisait vibrer un peu le corps entier du gros navire.

(p. 822)⁶⁵

Despite the anthropomorphic overtones, what is actually being depicted here is a scene which affirms the position of the ocean-going liner as part of the reality of a modern capitalist economy of circulation, rather than merely a means of escape from reality. The result, for Pierre, is that 'une tristesse nouvelle s'abattit sur lui, et l'enveloppa comme ces brumes qui courent sur la mer, venues du bout du monde et qui portent dans leur épaisseur insaisissable quelque chose de mystérieux et d'impur comme le souffle pestilentiel de terres malfaisantes et lointaines' (p. 822). In the same way that Pierre perceives what essentially constitute means of production and exchange as monstrous, he perceives as mysterious what should be understandable in terms of the medical science of which he is a practitioner. In attributing beastly qualities to machines, instead of accepting them as part of reality, he leaves himself open, once material reality makes itself irrevocably present, to reduction to

⁶⁵ Compare the loading of the *Ville-de-Montereau* in *L'Éducation sentimentale* (p. 1).

the level of beast himself, no longer suffering 'une douleur morale et torturante, mais l'affolement d'une bête sans abri, une angoisse matérielle d'être errant qui n'a plus de toit et que la pluie, le vent, l'orage, toutes les forces brutales du monde vont assaillir' (p. 823).

And indeed, it is by the brutal forces of modern reality that Pierre is assailed when he takes possession of 'la petite cabine flottante où serait désormais emprisonnée sa vie' (p. 826), which is a far cry from the romance of sea travel, even if the ship itself is hailed by Roland as 'ce magnifique navire' (p. 827). In fact, the ship is only magnificent to the extent that it resembles the opulent public spaces of the industrialising nations: 'le vaste hall flottant et cosmopolite' is a floating signifier of prosperous modernity as much as it is floating on the ocean:

Son luxe opulent était celui des grands hôtels, des théâtres, des lieux publics, le luxe imposant et banal qui satisfait l'œil des millionnaires.

(p. 828)

This is a banality, however, of which Pierre must remain an observer, despite its being the seaborne manifestation of the locus of his earlier ambitions. He is condemned to inhabit an intermediary zone between this world and that of the huddled masses. There is no escape from social mediocrity, either on land or at sea. The class system has been reproduced on the ship, and if bourgeois space is recreated in the great hall, the reality of modern proletarian conditions has been recreated below decks, 'dans une sorte de souterrain obscur et bas, pareil aux galeries des mines' (p. 828). Unable to bear the prospect of 'cette existence d'abominable misère', in which human beings are faceless and perceived almost as animals, Pierre retreats to his cabin, where he is awaited by his family, whose embarrassed silence is only disturbed by the 'agitation du navire'. Instead of engaging in any meaningful parting dialogue, Pierre indulges in defensive and prosaic exposition of his

new surroundings, meeting an enquiry from Mme Rosémilly about ‘ces petites fenêtres’ with the curt reply ‘C’est un hublot’, before proceeding to a long-winded explanation of ‘l’épaisseur qui rendait le verre capable de résister aux chocs les plus violents’, and ‘le système de fermeture’.⁶⁶ The same attention to technical detail is displayed in his taxonomic disquisition on ‘une bibliothèque de fioles’, which descends into ‘un vrai cours de thérapeutique qu’on semblait écouter avec grande attention’ (p. 829). It appears, then, that such terms are the only ones in which he can apprehend his new life. He has retreated from the exoticism of the sea voyage, and the illustrious medical career, to an existence based on prosaic cataloguing of information, in which phenomena have meaning only in terms of their distinguishability from others. Where previously an item on a list, the name of a ship, might provoke images of volcanoes and orange groves, Pierre has gone to the opposite extreme, where he is all too bitterly aware of the mundanity of his ocean-plying environment. And indeed, he loses his identity. As the *Lorraine*, described in terms which testify to the extent to which modern transport has become part of the landscape – ‘haut comme une montagne et rapide comme un train’ – clears Le Havre, Mme Roland becomes gradually less able to identify her son:

Il s’en allait, il fuyait, disparaissait, devenu déjà tout petit, effacé comme une tache imperceptible sur le gigantesque bâtiment. Elle s’efforçait de le reconnaître encore et ne le distinguait plus.

(p. 832)

The novel’s end recalls its beginning; Mme Roland can see nothing but ‘une petite fumée grise, si lointaine, si légère qu’elle avait l’air d’un peu de brume’ (p. 833). In the light of the story which precedes this scene, it is clear that the imperceptible plume of smoke is

⁶⁶ This again recalls Flaubert’s novel, in the form of Arnoux’s ‘calcul’ on the deck of the steamboat (*L’Éducation sentimentale*, p. 5).

identified with Pierre. Equally, however, it might remain identified with the crisis signalled at the beginning of the novel, which has come and gone, provisionally resolved in Pierre's departure. Indeed, the 'catastrophe d'ordre moral' at the centre of the novel cannot be wholly resolved; its outcome is left open-ended, just as phenomena and events in the world the novel depicts are open to interpretation by different subjectivities, which themselves are undermined, most obviously here in the case of Pierre, whose subjective delusions sit uneasily against his supposed professional objectivity. There can be no real objectivity, just as there can be no real closure. Maupassant says as much in the preface to the novel, which, although purportedly about '[le] Roman en général' (p. 703), in many respects can throw light on *Pierre et Jean*, in its insistence on the elusive quality of the reality which Pierre finds so difficult to grasp or accept, and to which he is ultimately condemned in its manifestation as a series of objective facts apprehended, as it were, 'dans le pêle-mêle de leur succession' (p. 709). Maupassant's preface, however, as well as being taken at face value as a statement on the Novel in general, may also, in a wider sense, provide insights into the nature of fictional representation in general, particularly in its relationship to fact. If a choice is imposed between the *vrai* and the *vraisemblable*, which limits the possibility of representing 'toute la vérité:

La vie, en outre, est composée des choses les plus différentes, les plus imprévues, les plus contraires, les plus disparates; elle est brutale, sans suite, sans chaîne, pleine de catastrophes inexplicables, illogiques et contradictoires qui doivent être classées au chapitre *faits divers*.
(p. 708)

The point here is that while such 'catastrophes inexplicables' must normally be classified as *faits divers*, entering thus an intermediate, indeterminate zone of unexplainedness, where the classificatory order breaks down in the very moment of classification so that they lose any real meaning, if, on the other hand, they are adopted by the serious novelist as subject

matter, they retain their inexplicable quality, but within an organic context in which the representation of life is not 'sans chaîne', unlike the mechanical context of the *conte*, in which, it will be recalled, in Barthes's terms, 'les situations ne s'enchaînent pas'. Thus the 'catastrophe d'ordre moral' at the heart of *Pierre et Jean* necessarily remains inexplicable. but is enriched with meaning, because the novelist, in adopting what Barthes refers to as 'un certain usage de la catastrophe' has imposed his 'illusion particulière' on it. If, in relation to Maupassant, we can accept Barthes's proposition that the *fait divers* 's'apparente à la nouvelle et au conte, et non plus au roman', we can do so because what the short stories (at least those discussed here) depict is a failure to offer explanation, a tendency to accept ready-made conclusions ordained by the *Doxa*, which the depiction erodes. The novels, on the other hand, insist on placing phenomena within an organic context which productively develops their inexplicability. The two novels discussed here depict different approaches to reality by protagonists. In *Bel-Ami*, Duroy successfully transcends reality, accepting the complexities, inconsistencies and indeed banalities of the modern world and eschewing awe at its technological creations. In *Pierre et Jean*, Pierre's obsessive search for truth, obstructed by its being rooted in such *Doxa*-informed awe, reduces him to the absurdity of a world where a narrow, positivist sense of reality prevails.

Conclusion

‘Ce Parasite Supplémentaire’

The foregoing chapters represent an attempt to explore naturalist fiction's representation of movement in systematised networks which occupied the physical and intellectual landscape of nineteenth-century France. In order to conclude, however, I wish to examine some perspectives on the notion of movement *per se*, if indeed it is possible to dissociate movement from the environment in which it occurs. Attempts at such dissociation are made by the protagonists of Maupassant's novel *Mont-Oriol* (1887), which relates the story of a health spa in the Auvergne run by unscrupulous doctors, who, as part of a profession which has supplanted the clergy as privileged interpreter of the world, offer cures as miraculous as those available at Lourdes. Essentially, the promise held out is that paralysis can be transformed into movement. Eventually, however, the doctors, the would-be dupers, are duped themselves by a wily peasant who feigns paralysis, and then recovery, in order to have lucrative therapeutic powers ascribed to the water on his land. The principal doctor involved, Latonne, founds an 'Institut médical de gymnastique automotrice' as part of one of two rival health spas. He initially appears to be a disciple of Bernard, counselling the daughter of the impotent Marquis de Ravenel in terms which might just as well have come from the pages of the *Introduction à l'étude de la médecine expérimentale*:

On était convaincu autrefois que toutes les maladies venaient d'un vice du sang ou d'un vice organique, aujourd'hui nous supposons simplement que, dans beaucoup de cas [...] les malaises indécis [...], et même des troubles graves, très graves, mortels, peuvent provenir uniquement de ce qu'un organe quelconque ayant pris sous des influences faciles à déterminer, un développement anormal au détriment des voisins, détruit toute harmonie.

tout l'équilibre du corps humain, modifie ou arrête ses fonctions, entrave le jeu de tous les autres organes.¹

The doctor laments the fact that there are so many rudimentary symptoms which 'les médecins peu observateurs attribuent à mille causes étrangères'. And indeed, the 'Institut de Gymnastique Automotrice' set up at the newly-built spa resort of Mont-Oriol, to which Latonne has defected from its rival, seems founded on empirical and holistic precepts which value the integrity of the human organism and the benefits of independent bodily movement, as the doctor explains to the engineer Paul Brétigny (responsible for the artificial diversion of water from its natural source to the resort):

Voici sur quels principes extrêmement rationnels j'ai établi mon traitement spécial par la gymnastique automotrice que nous allons visiter. Vous connaissez mon système de médecine organométrique, n'est-ce pas? Je prétends qu'une grande partie de nos maladies proviennent uniquement du développement excessif d'un organe qui empiète sur le voisin, gêne ses fonctions, et détruit en peu de temps l'harmonie générale du corps, d'où naissent les troubles les plus graves. Or l'exercice est, avec les douches et le traitement thermal, un des moyens les plus énergiques pour rétablir l'équilibre et ramener les parties envahissantes à leurs proportions normales.²

However, Latonne's vision of organic integrity is restricted to the body, which is firmly separated from the soul. Lest primacy be given to the flesh in an age where Cartesian dualism is under threat, it is the soul which is recognised as the initial source of kinetic energy:

Comment décider l'homme à faire de l'exercice? Il n'y a pas seulement dans l'acte de marcher, de monter à cheval, de nager ou de ramer un effort physique considérable; il y a aussi et surtout un effort moral. C'est l'esprit qui décide, entraîne et soutient le corps. Les hommes d'énergie sont des hommes de mouvement! Or, l'énergie est dans l'âme et non pas dans les muscles. Le corps obéit à la volonté vigoureuse.³

¹ Guy de Maupassant, *Mont-Oriol* (1887), in *Romans*, ed. Louis Forestier (Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1987), pp. 481-700 (p. 489).

² *Mont-Oriol*, p. 596.

³ *ibid.*

That is, the body is subordinate to the motive forces which animate it; motivation is essentially exterior to the organism. If the soul as energy source is separate from the body, then it can be replaced by any other form of exterior intervention conceived in the minds of the doctors:

Il ne faut point songer, mon cher, à donner du courage aux lâches ni de la résolution aux faibles. Mais nous pouvons faire autre chose, nous pouvons faire plus, nous pouvons supprimer le courage, supprimer l'énergie mentale, supprimer l'effort moral et ne laisser subsister que le mouvement physique. Cet effort moral, je le remplace avec avantage par une force étrangère et purement mécanique.⁴

This idealised form of pure movement is brought about by a range of machines into which the patient is strapped, facilitating the four main 'exercices naturels', namely 'la marche, l'équitation, la natation et le canotage', each of which develops different parts of the body. The end result of the process, that is the movement induced in the patient, is conveniently separated from its means of production:

Or, nous les possédons ici tous les quatre, produits artificiellement. On n'a qu'à se laisser faire, en ne pensant à rien, et on peut courir, monter à cheval, nager ou ramer pendant une heure sans que l'esprit prenne part, le moins du monde, à ce travail tout musculaire.⁵

Muscular work, however, is not undertaken by the patients at all, but by 'un homme dont les manches retroussés montraient des biceps vigoureux'. A demonstration is provided when Brétigny allows himself to be strapped in:

L'ingénieur s'était écroulé dans un fauteuil à bascule, et il posa ses jambes dans les jambes de bois à jointures mobiles attachées à ce siège. On lui sangla les cuisses, les mollets et les chevilles, de façon qu'il ne pût accomplir aucun mouvement volontaire; puis l'homme aux manches retroussées, saisissant la manivelle, la tourna de toute sa force. Le fauteuil d'abord

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ *Mont-Oriol*, p. 597.

se balançait comme un hamac, puis les jambes tout à coup partirent, s'allongeant et se recourbant, allant et revenant avec une vitesse extrême.⁶

Afterwards, when two other patients are strapped to the 'bêtes factices, bondissant comme des vagues, chavirant comme des navires', the sceptical engineer points out 'que les cavaliers n'avaient pas chaud, tandis que les tourneurs de manivelle étaient en sueur', and enquires whether a reversal of roles would not be more beneficial. To which the doctor, before exploiting an opportunity to change the subject, gravely replies:

'Oh! pas du tout, mon cher. Il ne faut pas confondre exercice et fatigue. Le mouvement de l'homme qui tourne la roue est mauvais, tandis que le mouvement du marcheur ou de l'écuyer est excellent'.⁷

The doctor's system of 'gymnastique automotrice', then, appears founded on a hierarchy of movement, the privileged form of which is that which is apparently self-sustaining. The movement which actually makes it possible, however, perhaps the more important, is marginalised, and not as worthy of consideration. This, in a sense, corresponds to dominant nineteenth-century discourses on modern industrial society, which self-confidently and ultimately self-deceptively present the social, political and economic organism as functioning in terms of a *perpetuum mobile*, the impossibility of which is conveniently put aside through a sidelining of the reality of the system's workings, a separation of the product from the problematic conditions of its production.

A hierarchy of movement, and the desire for self-sustaining operation of systems, mechanical, bodily or social, are not, however, exclusively nineteenth-century phenomena, but are part of a tradition going back as least as far as Plato, who, in *Timaeus*, idealises autonomous movement:

⁶ *Mont-Oriol*, pp. 597-98.

⁷ *Mont-Oriol*, p. 598.

Now of all motions that is the best which is produced in a thing by itself, for it is most akin to the motion of thought and of the universe; but that motion which is caused by others is not so good, and worst of all is that which moves the body, when at rest, in parts only and by some external agency. Wherefore of all modes of purifying and re-uniting the body the best is gymnastic; the next best is a surging motion, as in sailing away or any other mode of conveyance which is not fatiguing; the third sort of motion may be of use in a case of extreme necessity, but in any other will be adopted by no man of sense: I mean the purgative treatment of physicians [...].⁸

The type of movement privileged here is essential to good health; the logical conclusion of perfectly maintained good health is immortality. For Jacques Derrida, commenting on *Timaeus* (and, in passing, on *The Republic*) in *La Pharmacie de Platon*, the implication of this scheme is that ‘l’immortalité et la perfection d’un vivant consistent à n’avoir rapport à aucun dehors. C’est le cas de Dieu. Dieu n’a pas d’allergie’.⁹ Since God has to an extent been dismissed in the nineteenth century by the new religion of science, the inheritor of immortality and perfection is man, and by extension bourgeois society and the technology which it produces. It is not so much that it is really believed that man is immortal, that machines can function forever, and that capitalist society can indefinitely sustain itself: however, any dysfunction which may occur is attributed to external sources. As far as Latonne’s ‘gymnastique automotrice’ is concerned, the external intervention referred to here is utterly necessary for the illusion of perpetual motion to persist, and at the same time is the scapegoat for its failure to exist in reality. Despite Latonne’s theoretical idealisation of the closed organic system, and of movement which is self-sustaining (even if only in appearance), in practice, he is all too willing to resort to external remedies of the sort frowned on by Plato. Furthermore, while his system fraudulently purports to be a means of allowing the body to cure itself by internal means of ailments expressly identified as being

⁸ Plato, *Timaeus*, trans. by Benjamin Jowett, intr. by Glenn R. Morrow (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1949), para. 89, p.72

⁹ Jacques Derrida, *La Pharmacie de Platon* (1968), in *La Dissémination* (Paris: Seuil, 1972), pp. 69-197 (p.115).

internal in origin, one of its chief selling points is that it protects the body from diseases which come about through exposure to the external environment:

‘Je n’ai pas besoin de vous vanter les avantages de la natation sèche qui ne mouille pas le corps que de transpiration et n’expose, par conséquent, notre baigneur à aucun accident rhumismatal’.¹⁰

This is completely at odds with Latonne’s earlier pronouncements on external sources of illness. Instead of the body’s well-being deriving from good internal relations, it is constantly at risk from exterior contamination. More importantly, the illusion of self-sustaining motion created by external forces is at risk precisely from external factors.

This problematic state of affairs might perhaps be understood in terms of the Platonic notion of the *pharmakon*, used, along with its derivatives, throughout Plato’s works, according to Derrida, as part of ‘une chaîne de significations’.¹¹ In the passage from *Timaeus* cited above, the *pharmakon* is represented in derivative form by ‘the purgative treatment of physicians’ (*tes pharmakeutikes katharseôs*), and indeed, by exterior intervention as remedy for a system which in principle should right itself internally: for Plato, what is intended as a cure can also precipitate and prolong illness.¹² For our purposes, leaving Derrida’s wider epistemological preoccupations aside, we might, with Derrida, consider the *pharmakon*, in the context of the hierarchical understanding of movement, as ‘ce qui, survenant toujours du dehors, agissant comme le dehors lui-même, n’aura jamais de vertu propre et définissable’. For Dr Latonne, and in a wider sense, for holders of the ‘anti-entropic vision’ referred to in the introduction to this thesis, this ambiguous entity, operating necessarily on the margins of supposedly holistic systems,

¹⁰ Mont-Oriol, p. 598.

¹¹ Derrida, *La Pharmacie de Platon*, p. 108.

¹² Derrida, *La Pharmacie de Platon*, p. 78, p. 114.

which makes possible the literally mimetic illusion of perpetual motion, is at the same time the 'parasite supplémentaire' which threatens dysfunction. For Derrida, 'la nocivité du *pharmakon* est accusée au moment précis où tout le contexte semble autoriser sa traduction par 'remède' plutôt que par poison'.¹³

For Plato, writing is a form of mimetic representation which can be characterised as emblematic of the *pharmakon* because, in promising enhanced wisdom on account of its mnemonic purpose (which operates externally to memory), it undermines the internal capacity to remember, and provides appearance at the expense of reality. The manner in which the 'master discourse' of movement in the nineteenth century attempts to exploit the *pharmakon* of external interference in order to represent various systems in terms of simulacra of internally coherent perpetual motion might too be regarded as performing a similarly ambiguous mimetic function, based on fundamentally unstable oppositions, the most important of which are those between good functioning and dysfunction, and between interior and exterior. These interact in such a way that the 'supplement' of externality completes the illusion of internally validated perpetual motion, but is necessarily a dangerous supplement in that it is the very factor which externally brings about dysfunction, or at least to which dysfunction is attributed.¹⁴ If there is a central conclusion to be drawn from the sum of the chapters of this thesis, it is that by using the very terms of reference of this illusory problematics, and in a wider sense by replicating mimetically as part of a larger canvas, indeed inhabiting, the form of discourse which subscribes to it, naturalist fiction destabilises the former and undermines the latter.

The most obvious examples of *pharmaka* in the texts studied are to be found in *La*

¹³ Derrida, *La Pharmacie de Platon*, p. 115.

¹⁴ I allude here to 'ce dangereux supplément...', Derrida's reading of Rousseau, in Jacques Derrida. *De la grammatologie* (Paris: Minuit, 1967), pp. 203-34.

Bête humaine and *Nana*. In the former novel, Jacques Lantier believes that the application of *graisse* to the workings of his locomotive will enhance its performance. The locomotive, by definition, is an entropic thermodynamic system, which, functioning as it were on its own steam, will run down because of its very nature. External intervention of the type Jacques enacts may create the illusion that the laws of thermodynamics can be transgressed to produce a perfectly functioning system which will not tend towards thermal death; however, the use of *graisse* actually hastens this tendency, functioning as poison in the very moment of its incorporation into the system as remedy. Similarly, through his attempts to resolve by superficial means the external behavioural symptoms of his 'fêlure héréditaire' (such as investing his erotic impulses in the machine), Jacques only widens the crack and hastens his descent into homicidal violence. The anti-entropic vision entertained by Jacques and by the novel's narration is undermined by a text which implicitly accepts natural processes for what they are, and affirms, in its paradoxically law-breaking coda (or indeed, supplement), that the illusion of perpetual motion comes at a price.

In *Nana*, the degeneration of Second-Empire society is attributed, by texts within the text representing various strands of sociological and medical thinking, to an external virus carried by a frenetically mobile parasite personified by the novel's eponymous heroine. The implication here is that the social body is a fundamentally sound organism which cannot degenerate on account of its own internal *détraquements*. *Nana*, on the other hand, is perceived as having entranced and seduced Paris, only to lay it low. In this she might be seen in terms of a particular manifestation of the *pharmakon* in ancient Greek civilisation identified by Derrida:

Il s'agit du mot '*pharmakos*' (sorcier, magicien, empoisonneur), synonyme de *pharmakeus* (utilisé par Platon), qui a l'originalité d'avoir été surdéterminé, surchargé par la culture grecque d'une autre fonction. D'un autre rôle, et formidable.

On a comparé le personnage du *pharmakos* à un bouc émissaire. Le *mal* et le *dehors*, l'expulsion du mal, son exclusion hors du corps (et hors) de la cité, telles sont les deux significations majeures du personnage et de la pratique rituelle.¹⁵

Exclusion from the social body is already a 'signification' of this personage; likewise, the scapegoated supplementary parasite Nana is always already perceived as being exterior to the city which she allegedly contaminates. However, the very structures and workings of the city facilitate her rise to infamy. As far as ritual punishment as means of exclusion is concerned, the *pharmakos*, according to Derrida, could expect death, most often coming about as 'l'effet secondaire d'une énergique fustigation. Qui visait d'abord les organes génitaux'.¹⁶ While the denunciation as external source of illness targets her sexual organ, her death does not come about in this way. Rather, as we learn in that most naturalist of supplements, *Le Docteur Pascal*, her death, along with the demise of the Second Empire, is rooted in the era in which the novel's events take place, as part of 'une telle contagion, dans l'air empesté de l'époque, qu'elle-même se décomposait et crevait de la petite vérole noire, prise au lit de mort de son fils Louiset, tandis que, sous ses fenêtres, Paris passait, ivre, frappé de la folie de la guerre, se ruant à l'écroulement de tout'.¹⁷ Instead of seeing the rot as coming from within, the fabric of discourses which come together in Fauchery's article presents an external parasitical scapegoat, functioning at one moment in terms of spontaneous ovulation or generation, at the next in terms of the unsatisfied wandering womb first identified in Plato's *Timaeus*.¹⁸ The true cause of social degeneration cannot be pinned down because of the fantastical lengths gone to in order to avoid confronting the

¹⁵ Derrida, *La Pharmacie de Platon*, p. 149.

¹⁶ Derrida, *La Pharmacie de Platon*, p. 151.

¹⁷ Émile Zola, *Le Docteur Pascal* (1893), in *Les Rougon-Macquart. Histoire naturelle et sociale d'une famille sous le Second Empire*, ed. Henri Mitterand, 5 vols (Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1960-67), V (1967), 913-1220 (pp. 1013-14).

¹⁸ Plato, *Timaeus*, para. 94, p. 74 (cited in Chapter Four above). That is, five paragraphs after the disquisition on movement quoted above.

internally obvious, much in the same way that Nana's disappearance towards the end of the novel provokes a multitude of legends: 'les plus étranges histoires circulaient, chacun donnait des renseignements opposés et prodigieux'.¹⁹ And just as Nana's death from 'la petite vérole' is a perhaps shockingly banal one (if also shockingly horrible visually), the dysfunction of the social body is rooted in the relationships between its constituent organs, according to the Bernardian model which underpins the novel, and is indeed present in Fauchery's article, just as it is present in Dr Latonne's 'gymnastique automotrice': in both these cases, naturalist fiction depicts the grafting onto this model of other interpretations of the body which identify the poison and the remedy as coming from outside, while proclaiming the body to be an essentially self-perpetuating organism.

The most emblematic model of such an organism to be found in the fictional texts studied here is that of Mouret's department store in *Au Bonheur des Dames*. In the present context, it is perhaps the most problematic, in that its functioning is in fact unproblematic. The store, and the wider networks which it inhabits, function as a closed system, with no outside interference, and no dysfunction, other than in the unsystematic, 'un-circulatory' forms of exchange which commodity capitalism has replaced. In this, the novel is a useful yardstick against which the novels which depict dysfunctional systems can be read. More importantly, from a temporal point of view in which there is an awareness that the system it describes has met its demise, it expresses a vision which coincides with the way in which the network of boulevards in Paris was conceived during the Second Empire, as part of a smoothly operating capitalist economy, and with euphoric discourses about the social organism such as Maxime du Camp's *Paris*. The latter work, researched during the latter part of the Second Empire, and centred on a synchronic portrait of Paris in the year 1867, was written and published during the period 1869-75, and so represents actual nostalgia.

¹⁹ Zola, *Nana* (1880), II (1961), 1093-1485 (p. 1471).

rather than an account which is a self-avowed fairy tale, published subsequently to other novels of Parisian dysfunction. As if to affirm the perfect nature of the organism described in *Paris*, Du Camp subsequently brought out a dysfunctional supplement, *Les Convulsions de Paris* (1878-80), in which the downfall of Second-Empire Paris is firmly attributed to outside agitation, in the form of 'le vent de la folie révolutionnaire', which induces hysterical convulsions in the body/machine through interference with its 'rouages'. *Au Bonheur des Dames*, conversely, is the smoothly functioning counterpart to a dysfunction which is already acknowledged elsewhere in an evolving series of novels, which in its conception from the outset as a system in many ways reflects the systems and networks which it represents. The interest in *Au Bonheur des Dames* for our purposes, precisely because there is no dysfunction, lies in the novel's obsessive pursuit of the notion of the network, an idea which predated the nineteenth century, but which found its highest concrete expression in haussmannization. According to Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson:

There is more than a little justification in reading the reworking of nineteenth-century Paris as an amazing, and ultimately futile, attempt to impose Cartesian France on the unruly France of the romantics and the Revolution.²⁰

The vanity of this attempt must be seen in the context of a tension which pervaded the nineteenth century between order and disorder, which is related to the wider question of why there should be a belief in, or desire for, self-perpetuating motion in nineteenth-century France. Historically, we have seen how the emergence of the modern transport network was not an overnight phenomenon: rather, the roots of the network are in the early eighteenth century. Likewise, the scientific, technological, sociological and philosophical implications of the 'transport revolution' in the mid- to late-nineteenth century have to be

²⁰ Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson, *Paris as Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), p. 119.

seen in the context of a major paradigm shift which began many decades earlier, but which still had not been entirely assimilated culturally. Essentially, a world of Cartesian order – the emergence of which had itself been groundbreaking, with aftershocks still felt – had become a world of Darwinian and thermodynamic disorder; a world of machines, functioning according to externally applied equal and opposite forces, had become a world of motors, based on energy transfer between different states of matter. The internal functioning of these motors was to all intents and purposes ‘invisible’, so it is perhaps understandable that there was a widespread tendency to perceive new technology, in this context as in others, in terms of the old, not least because the dissolution of the old categories raised uncomfortable questions about human beings and their relationship to the world, in particular to machines and animals. If motors, in a world still nursing the Cartesian hangover, were perceived as machines, the entropy of the former was not a factor for consideration. The ‘anti-entropic vision’, however, was not restricted to thermodynamics, but extended to a consideration of the many revolutionary systems constituting modernity as self-perpetuating unless and until external intervention destabilised them, and a reluctance to consider their functioning as essentially problematic.

Nor was the perception of the new in terms of the old an exclusively technological tendency. We have seen, in *L'Éducation sentimentale*, how the perceiving human subject, assailed by the confusing plethora of experiences modernity has to offer, tends to assimilate them through a refractive representational prism informed by previously dominant aesthetic forms. Frédéric Moreau's ultimately self-deceptive and self-defeating approach to modern life is founded on clichés extracted from Romantic and pre-Romantic fiction; however, at the same time, the way in which he perceives the world is informed by and integrated into technological changes of which the novel displays a highly subtle awareness, not least in the area of the reconfiguration of vision which had taken place by the early nineteenth

century, in which movement was a central factor. Frédéric is constantly, at times perhaps wilfully, unable to distinguish between stasis and movement, as if subject to one of the optical devices which emerged in the early nineteenth century, for entertainment as much as for scientific enquiry, and intended to create the illusion of movement, to generate the symbolic triumph of life over death, as much as to investigate its reality. The novel's subtle allusions to the distorting effects produced by such devices, and ultimately to the fact that perception and representation had been transformed, even if fictional protagonists remain wilfully unaware of this transformation in order to wallow in pre-modern sentimentality, are paralleled by its allusions to the reality of the technological processes involved in producing movement. In its incorporation of such scientific realities, and implicit acceptance that they have been around for some time and are not going to go away, it undermines the *bêtise* of euphoria over the novelty of modern transport, which it refuses to idealise in pre-modern terms of reference, leaving that, rather, to the mouthpieces of received wisdom with which the novel is populated.

It is as an irreversible social and technological reality that Maupassant's fiction represents modern travel, in an age when it is no longer a novelty for anyone. Both novels and *contes* perform the same subversive function as Flaubert's novel in relation to the exaggeration of that reality and its implications. This is essentially because of the fact that if there is a *Doxa* of mass public transport in the nineteenth century, it is one which is as pessimistic as it is euphoric. This finds expression philosophically and poetically earlier in the century in the musings of the likes of Vigny and Du Camp on the apparent triumph of the machine, perceived negatively by the former, euphorically by the latter, but in the same terms of reference. Maupassant's novels, very much in the 'organic' naturalist mould, but at the same time as distinct from Zola's, meditatively question the investment of machines with supernatural qualities which elevate them to a status undeserved because of its denial

of the essentially natural determinism according to which they function: any attempt to consider them other than as banal features of modern life is subverted. Maupassant's short fiction performs a similar function, but represents and undermines the *Doxa* particularly in its manifestation in terms of the fears and anxieties of the petite bourgeoisie in the face of the instability of the industrial age, to which as a class it felt particularly vulnerable. The combination of the short form and the confined space of the railway carriage is a highly productive one in the context of this function: it allows parodic versions of the dread events which supposedly occur 'en wagon' to be enacted sufficiently swiftly to dismiss the *Doxa* comically out of hand, but first and foremost, it creates a space in which intradiegetic narrative voices can be set up, more often than not to be derided. This is a point which has wider implications for naturalist fiction, as it highlights the problematic nature of the relationship between author and narrator which exists in all the texts examined in this thesis. There is always a temptation to conflate the two, and very often this is done unthinkingly, not least in the case of Maupassant criticism. What the example of Maupassant in particular shows is that the tale cannot be understood fully unless the narrator, or even *chroniqueur*, is accepted as a persona as fictional as any of the other characters depicted within the diegesis. And in a wider sense, the full implications of naturalist fiction cannot be grasped unless a distinction between narrative and text is adhered to. Only when the narrative voice is considered one of many complementary voices can the totality of the text be apprehended.

The incorporation of many voices into a master discourse is, after all, a key strategy of naturalist fiction: it is by seamless adoption of the texts and subtexts of the master discourse which it seeks to undermine that it succeeds in doing so. This strategy is evident throughout the texts studied in this thesis, but it is in relation to *La Curée* that it has been most closely examined in terms of its centrality to the evolution and status of naturalism as

a genre. This is chiefly because the different texts appropriated, and to varying degrees reworked, by the second *Rougon-Macquart* novel, are characterised by taxonomies of dysfunctional movement – enumerations of the vehicles involved in traffic jams – which are in turn related to further taxonomic networks, equally dysfunctional, present in the world represented by naturalism. Naturalist fiction is a literature which deals in categories and classifications, but which at the same time is impossible to categorise and classify. It is a literature which shows that the boundaries between categories are blurred. In *La Curée*, the employment of taxonomy as a representational strategy, combined with an insistence, characteristic of the cycle, on nature as an ultimate determinant, results precisely in the destabilisation of taxonomic categories and preconceived boundaries, particularly spatial ones, the most notable of which is that between interior and exterior. The distinction between interior and exterior is crucial to the anti-entropic visionaries' belief in the perpetual motion which naturalist fiction at every turn undermines. But for the naturalist text, there is no exterior. Every discourse, every novel, every genre, every modern phenomenon, is ripe for incorporation into the naturalist organism. If, in this sense, '*il n'y a pas de hors-texte*', it is because naturalist fiction refuses to consider anything as being beyond the parameters of its textual enquiry: constant supplementation there may be, but none of naturalism's supplements is parasitical, or dangerous to anything other than the self-confidence of the bourgeois world view, constantly in search of parasites to scapegoat for dysfunction which naturalism accepts as part of – for want of a better word – nature.²¹ Naturalism is a network in constant evolutionary, if not revolutionary, development, a *toile* extending and expanding throughout the intellectual, social and physical landscape of the nineteenth century, modelled on the incessantly if not perpetually mobile world it represents and scrutinises. It is, in short, '*le grand transit moderne*'.

²¹ Derrida, '*ce dangereux supplément...*', p. 227.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

I. Manuscript

Flaubert, Gustave, Rough Drafts for *L'Éducation sentimentale*

Bibliothèque Nationale, Salle des Manuscrits, Nouvelles acquisitions françaises, 17599-610

Zola, Émile, Dossier Préparatoire for *La Curée*

Bibliothèque Nationale, Salle des Manuscrits, Nouvelles acquisitions françaises, 10282

Zola, Émile, Dossier Préparatoire for *Nana*

Bibliothèque Nationale, Salle des Manuscrits, Nouvelles acquisitions françaises, 10313

Zola, Émile, Dossier Préparatoire for *Au Bonheur des Dames*

Bibliothèque Nationale, Salle des Manuscrits, Nouvelles acquisitions françaises, 10277-78

Zola, Émile, Dossier Préparatoire for *Germinal*

Bibliothèque Nationale, Salle des Manuscrits, Nouvelles acquisitions françaises, 10307-08

Zola, Émile, Dossier Préparatoire for *La Bête humaine*

Bibliothèque Nationale, Salle des Manuscrits, Nouvelles acquisitions françaises, 10274

II. Published Nineteenth-Century Literary Texts

Baudelaire, Charles, *Œuvres*, ed. Y.-G. Le Dantec (Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1951)

Claretie, Jules, *Le Train 17* [1877](Paris: Dentu, 1890)

Du Camp, Maxime, *Les Chants modernes*, 2nd edn (Paris: Bourdillat, 1860)

Flaubert, Gustave, *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, incorporating *Dictionnaire des idées reçues* (Paris: Garnier, 1966)

Flaubert, Gustave, *L'Éducation sentimentale. Histoire d'un jeune homme* [1869]. ed. P.M. Wetherill (Paris: Garnier, 1984)

Goncourt, Edmond et Jules de, *Journal. Mémoires de la vie littéraire*, ed. Robert Ricatte, 22 vols (Paris: Fasquelle et Flammarion, 1956)

Goncourt, Edmond [et Jules] de, *La Fille Élisa* [1877] (Paris: La Boîte à Documents, 1990)

Hugo, Victor, *Notre-Dame de Paris* [1831], ed. Jacques Seebacher (Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1975)

Hugo, Victor, *Correspondance familiale et écrits intimes*, ed. Jean Gaudon et al., 2 vols (Paris: Laffont, 1988, 1991)

Huysmans, Joris-Karl, *Œuvres Complètes de J.-K. Huysmans*, 18 vols (Paris: Crès, 1928-34)

Huysmans, Joris-Karl, *A Rebours* [1884] (Paris: Gallimard, Collection Folio, 1977)

Huysmans, Joris-Karl, 'Sac au Dos', in *Les Soirées de Médan* [1880], ed. Colette Becker (Paris: Le Livre à venir, 1981 [based on 1930 Fasquelle edition])

Maupassant, Guy de, *Contes et Nouvelles*, ed. Louis Forestier, 2 vols (Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1974, 1979)

Maupassant, Guy de, *Romans*, ed. Louis Forestier (Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1987)

Schwob, Marcel, *Le Train 081* [1889], pp. 49-54, and *L'Homme voilé* [1890], pp. 79-84, in *Cœur double* [first publ. Paris: Ollendorff, 1891] (Toulouse: Ombres, 1996)

Stendhal, *Le Rouge et le Noir* (Paris: Livre de Poche, 1958)

Vigny, Alfred de, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. F. Baldensperger, 2 vols (Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1950)

Zola, Émile, *Les Rougon-Macquart. Histoire naturelle et sociale d'une famille sous le Second Empire*, ed. Henri Mitterand, 5 Vols (Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1960-67)

Zola, Émile, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Henri Mitterand, 15 vols (Paris: Cercle du Livre Précieux, 1966-70)

Zola, Émile, *Le Roman expérimental* [1880] (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1971)

Zola, Émile, *Carnets d'enquêtes. Une ethnographie inédite de la France*. ed. Henri Mitterand (Paris: Plon, 1986)

III. Medical, Sociological, Scientific, Technological and Critical Texts of the Nineteenth Century

Bernard, Claude, *Introduction à la médecine expérimentale* (1865; Paris: Flammarion. n.d.)

Brachet, Jean-Louis, *Traité de l'hystérie* (Paris: Baillière, 1847)

Briquet, Pierre, *Traité clinique et thérapeutique de l'hystérie* (Paris: Baillière, 1859)

Capuron, Joseph (Dr.), *Nouveau Dictionnaire de médecine, de chirurgie, de physique, de chimie et d'histoire naturelle* (Paris: J.-A. Brosson, 1806)

Chapus, Eugène, *Voyageur, Prenez Garde à Vous!* (Paris: Decaux, 1877)

Du Camp, Maxime, *Paris ses organes ses fonctions et sa vie dans la seconde moitié du XIXe siècle*, 6 vols (Paris: Hachette, 1869-75)

Du Camp, Maxime, *Les Convulsions de Paris*, 2nd edn, 4 vols (Paris: Hachette, 1878-80)

Haussmann, Baron Georges-Eugène, *Mémoires*, 3 Vols (Paris: Victor Havard, 1890-93)

Jaccoud, *Nouveau Dictionnaire de médecine et de chirurgie* (Paris: Baillière, 1874)

Landouzy, Hector, *Traité complet de l'hystérie* (Paris: Baillière, 1846)

Larousse, Pierre, 'Chemins de fer', in *Grand Dictionnaire du XIXe siècle*, 17 Vols (Paris: Librairie Classique Larousse et Boyer, 1866-76), III (1868), 1130-69

Lefèvre, P., Cerbelaud, G., *Les Chemins de fer des origines à 1890* [1890] (Paris: Europe Éditions, 1969)

Leroux, Pierre, *Aux États de Jersey, sur un moyen de quintupler, pour ne pas dire plus, la production agricole du pays* (London: Universal Library, 1853)

Leroux, Pierre, *Sept Discours sur la situation actuelle de la société et de l'esprit humain. Premier Discours* (Paris: L'Auteur, 1841; repr. Geneva: Slatkine, 1973)

Lucas, Prosper, *Traité philosophique et physiologique de l'hérédité naturelle*. 2 vols (Paris: Baillière, 1847, 1850)

Maistre, Joseph de, *Éclaircissements sur les sacrifices* [1821]. annex to *Les Soirées de Saint-Petersbourg, ou Entretiens sur le gouvernement temporel de la Providence* [1821] (Lyon: Lesne, 1842)

- Marey, Étienne-Jules, *La Machine animale* [first publ. Paris: Germer Baillière, 1873] (Paris: Alcan, 1886)
- Marx, Karl, *Capital*, 3 Vols [1867, 1884, 1893] (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1977)
- Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* [1848]. intr. by A.J.P. Taylor (London: Penguin, 1985)
- Parent-Duchâtelet, Alexandre, *De La Prostitution dans la Ville de Paris* (1836), 2nd edn. 2 vols, Paris (Baillière, 1857)
- Pouchet, Félix-Archimède, *Théorie positive de l'ovulation spontanée* (Paris: Baillière, 1847)
- Pouchet, Félix-Archimède, *Hétérogénie, ou Traité de la génération spontanée, basé sur de nouvelles expériences* (Paris: Baillière, 1859)
- Ruskin, John, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* [1849], in *The Works of John Ruskin. Library Edition*, 38 vols (London: Allen, 1903-12), VIII (1903)
- Taine, Hippolyte, *Origines de la France contemporaine* [1875-93] (Paris: Laffont. 1972)

IV. Internet Resources: Nineteenth-Century Texts Available Online

<http://abu.cnam.fr/BIB/auteurs/>

<http://www.gallica.fr>

Secondary Sources

- Adorno, Theodor, *In Search of Wagner*, trans. by Rodney Livingstone (London: Verso, 1981)
- Baguley, David, *Naturalist Fiction. The Entropic Vision* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990)
- Baroli, Marc, *Le Train dans la littérature française* (Paris: Éditions N.M., 1969)
- Barthes, Roland, *Œuvres complètes*, 3 vols, ed. Éric Marty (Paris: Seuil, 1993-95)
- Beer, Gillian, *Darwin's Plots* (London: Routledge, 1983)
- Beizer, Janet, 'Uncovering Nana: The Courtesan's New Clothes', *Esprit Créateur*, 25 (1985), 45-56

- Beizer, Janet, *Ventriloquized Bodies. Narratives of Hysteria in Nineteenth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994)
- Bellos, David, 'From the Bowels of the Earth: An Essay on *Germinal*', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 15 (1979), 35-45
- Benjamin, Walter, *Charles Baudelaire. A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism* (London: NLB, 1973)
- Benjamin, Walter, *Paris, Capitale du XIXe siècle*, trad. Jean Lacoste, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Paris: Cerf, 1993)
- Benjamin, Walter, *The Arcades Project* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1999)
- Berman, Marshall, *All That is Solid Melts into Air. The Experience of Modernity* (London: Verso, 1983)
- Bernheimer, Charles, *Figures of Ill Repute. Representing Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989)
- Bertrand-Jennings, Chantal, *L'Éros et la femme chez Zola* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1977)
- Besnard-Coursodon, Micheline, *Étude thématique et structurelle de l'œuvre de Maupassant: Le Piège* (Paris: Nizet, 1973)
- The New English Bible, with the Apocrypha* (Oxford and Cambridge: Oxford University Press and Cambridge University Press, 1970)
- Bird, Alexander, *Thomas Kuhn* (Chesham: Acumen, 2000)
- Borie, Jean, *Zola et les mythes. De la nausée au salut* (Paris: Seuil, 1971)
- Borie, Jean, *Le Tyran timide. Le naturalisme de la femme au XIXe siècle* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1973)
- Bourdieu, Pierre, *Les Règles de l'Art. Genèse et structure du champ littéraire* (Paris: Seuil, 1992)
- Bowlby, Rachel, *Just Looking. Consumer Culture in Dreiser, Gissing and Zola* (London: Methuen, 1985)
- Brombert, Victor, *The Novels of Flaubert* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966)
- Brombert, Victor, 'De Novembre à *L'Éducation*: Communication et voie publique'. *Revue d'Histoire Littéraire de la France*, 81 (1981), 563-72
- Brooks, Peter, 'Machines et moteurs du récit', *Romantisme*, 46 (1984), 97-104

- Brooks, Peter, *Reading for the Plot. Design and Intention in Narrative* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984)
- Brush, Stephen G., *The Kind of Motion we call Heat: A History of the Kinetic Theory of Gases in the Nineteenth Century*, 2 vols (Amsterdam, 1976)
- Buisine, Alain, 'Paris-Lyon-Maupassant', in *Maupassant miroir de la nouvelle* (St-Denis: Presses Universitaires de Vincennes, 1988), pp.17-39
- Burch, Noël, 'Charles Baudelaire versus Doctor Frankenstein', *Afterimage*, 8 (1981), 4-23
- Calder, Martin, 'Something in the Water: Self as Other in Guy de Maupassant's *Le Horla*: A Barthesian Reading', *French Studies*, 52 (1998), 42-57
- Callen, Anthea, 'Immaterial Views? Science, Intransigence and the Female Spectator of Modern French Art in 1878', in *French Literature, Thought and Culture in the Nineteenth Century. A Material World. Essays in Honour of D.G. Charlton*, ed. by Brian Rigby (London: Macmillan, 1993), pp. 184-97
- Carles, Patricia, Desgranges, Béatrice, 'Emile Zola ou Le cauchemar de l'hystérie et les rêveries de l'utérus', *Les Cahiers naturalistes*, 69 (1991), 13-32
- Caron, François, *Histoire des Chemins de Fer en France*, 2 vols (Paris: Fayard, 1997)
- Chalonge, Florence de, 'Espace, regard et perspectives: La promenade au bois de Boulogne dans *La Curée* d'Émile Zola', *Littérature*, 65 (1987), 58-69
- Charlton, D.G., *Positivist Thought in France 1852-1870* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959)
- Chevrel, Yves, *Le Naturalisme* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1982)
- Chevrel, Yves, "'Le modèle du roman naturaliste": *L'Éducation sentimentale*', in *Mimesis et Semiosis. Miscellanées offertes à Henri Mitterand*, ed. Philippe Hamon and Jean-Pierre Leduc-Adine (Paris: Nathan, 1992)
- Clark, T.J., *The Painting of Modern Life. Paris in the Art of Manet and his Followers* (New York: Knopf, 1985)
- Cogman, P. M.W., 'Marcel Schwob and the Railway Story', *Australian Journal of French Studies*, 37 (2000), 22-39
- Collins, Jeff, and Bill Mayblin, *Derrida for Beginners*, ed. by Richard Appignanesi (Cambridge: Icon, 1996)
- Cooper, Barbara T., and Mary Donaldson-Evans, eds, *Moving Forward, Holding Fast. The Dynamics of Nineteenth-Century French Culture* (Amsterdam-Atlanta: Rodopi, 1997)

- Corbin, Alain, *Les Filles de noce. Misère sexuelle et prostitution aux 19e et 20e siècles* (Paris: Aubier Montaigne, 1978)
- Corbin, Alain, *Le Temps, le désir et l'horreur* (Paris: Aubier, 1991)
- Corbin, Alain, 'Le XIXe siècle ou la nécessité de l'assemblage'. in *L'Invention du XIXe siècle: Le XIXe siècle par lui-même*, textes réunis et publiés par Alain Corbin, Pierre Georgel, Stéphane Guéjan, Stéphane Michaud, Max Milner et Nicole Sarry (Paris: Klincksieck, 1999), pp. 152-59
- Crary, Jonathan, *Techniques of the Observer. On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990)
- Cuddon, J. A., *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, 4th edn (London: Penguin, 1999)
- Culler, Jonathan, 'Jacques Derrida', in *Structuralism and Since*, ed. by John Sturrock (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), pp. 154-80
- Derrida, Jacques, *De la grammatologie* (Paris: Minuit, 1967)
- Derrida, Jacques, *La Pharmacie de Platon* (1968), in *La Dissémination* (Paris: Seuil, 1972), pp. 69-197
- Daumas, Maurice, ed., *Encyclopédie de la Pléiade. Histoire de la Science* (Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1957)
- Debord, Guy, *La Société du spectacle* (Paris: Gallimard, 1967)
- Deleuze, Gilles, 'Zola et la fêlure', in *Logique du Sens* (Paris: Minuit, 1969), repr. in Émile Zola, *La Bête humaine* (Paris: Gallimard, édition Folio, 1977), pp. 7-24
- Denomné, Robert, 'The Theme of Disintegration in Flaubert's *Éducation sentimentale*', *Kentucky Romance Quarterly*, 20 (1973), 163-71
- Descartes, René, *Discours de la méthode* [1637] (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1973)
- Desormeaux, Daniel, 'Du Bon Usage de l'anecdote: *Le Grand Dictionnaire Universel du XIXe Siècle* de Pierre Larousse', *Romanic Review*, 89 (1998), 231-42
- Dezalay, Auguste, *L'Opéra des Rougon-Macquart. Essai de rythmologie romanesque* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1983)
- Driver, Felix, and David Gilbert, eds, *Imperial Cities. Landscape, Display and Identity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999)
- Duffy, Larry, and Catherine Emerson, eds, *La Nature dévoilée. French Literary Responses to Science* (Hull: Department of French, University of Hull, 2000)

- Duffy, Larry, and Adrian Tudor, eds, *Les Lieux interdits. Transgression and French Literature* (Hull: Hull University Press, 1998)
- Egerton, Judy, *Turner, The Fighting Temeraire* (London: National Gallery Publications, 1995)
- Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th edn (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1990)
- Ferguson, Priscilla Parkhurst, 'Mobilité et Modernité dans *La Curée*', *Les Cahiers naturalistes*, 67 (1993), 73-81
- Ferguson, Priscilla Parkhurst, *Paris as Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994)
- Fernier, Robert, *La Vie et l'œuvre de Gustave Courbet*, 2 vols (Lausanne: Bibliothèque des Arts, 1979)
- Foucault, Michel, *Les Mots et les choses* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966)
- Foucault, Michel, *Histoire de la sexualité. 1. La volonté de savoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976)
- France, Peter, ed., *The New Oxford Companion to Literature in French* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995)
- Frémot, Anne, ed., *Fin de siècle?* (Nottingham: University of Nottingham Department of French, 1998)
- Freud, Sigmund, 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle' (1920), pp. 594-626, 'The Ego and the Id' (1923), pp. 629-58, in *The Freud Reader*, ed. by Peter Gay (London: Vintage, 1995)
- Gaillard, Françoise, "'Où": L'inconnue d'un siècle qui pourtant va de l'avant', in *Moving Forward, Holding Fast. The Dynamics of Nineteenth-Century French Culture*, ed. by Barbara T. Cooper and Mary Donaldson-Evans (Amsterdam-Atlanta: Rodopi, 1997), pp. 201-15
- Garnier, Marcel and Valéry Delamare, *Dictionnaire des termes techniques de médecine* (Paris: Maloine, 1900)
- Garnier, Marcel and Delamare, Valéry, *Dictionnaire des termes techniques de médecine*. 10e éd. (Paris: Maloine, 1931)
- Genette, Gérard, *Figures III* (Paris: Seuil, 1972)
- Green, Nicholas, *The Spectacle of Nature. Landscape and Bourgeois Culture in Nineteenth-Century France* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990)

- Hamon, Philippe, *Le Personnel du roman. Le système des personnages dans les Rougon-Macquart d'Émile Zola* (Geneva: Droz, 1983)
- Hamon, Philippe, *Expositions. Littérature et Architecture au XIXe siècle* (Paris: Corti, 1989)
- Hamon, Philippe, *La Bête humaine d'Émile Zola* (Paris: Gallimard, série Foliothèque, 1994)
- Harsin, Jill, *Policing Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century Paris* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985)
- Hayles, N. Katherine, *Chaos Bound* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990)
- Hellemans, Alexander and Bryan Bunch, *The Timetables of Science. A Chronology of the Most Important People and Events in the History of Science* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988)
- Hertz, Neil, *The End of the Line. Essays on Psychoanalysis and the Sublime* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985)
- Huyssens, Andreas, *After the Great Divide. Modernism, Mass Culture and Postmodernism* (London: Macmillan, 1986)
- Ingelbien, Raphaël, 'Intertextuality, Critical Politics and the Modernist Canon: The Case of Virginia Woolf', *Paragraph*, 22 (1999), 278-92
- Iser, Wolfgang, *The Implied Reader* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974)
- Knight, Diana, 'Object Choices: Taste and Fetishism in Flaubert's *L'Éducation sentimentale*', in *French Literature, Thought and Culture in the Nineteenth Century. A Material World. Essays in Honour of D.G. Charlton*, ed. by Brian Rigby (London: Macmillan, 1993), pp. 198-217
- Kranowski, Nathan, *Paris dans les romans d'Émile Zola* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1968)
- Kuhn, Thomas S., *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962)
- Laqueur, Thomas, 'Orgasm, Generation, and the Politics of Reproductive Biology', *Representations*, 14 (1986), 1-41
- Le Bras-Chopard, Armelle, *De l'égalité dans la différence. Le socialisme de Pierre Leroux* (Paris: Presses de la fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 1986)
- Leclerc, Yvan, *Gustave Flaubert. 'L'Éducation sentimentale'* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1997)

- Lethbridge, Robert, *Maupassant: Pierre et Jean* (London: Grant and Cutler, 1984)
- Lethbridge, Robert, 'Zola et Haussmann: Une Expropriation Littéraire', in *'La Curée' de Zola* (Paris: SEDES, 1987), pp. 85-96
- Louâpre, Muriel, 'La Bête et la Machine', in *Itinéraires du XIXe siècle. Textes réunis par Paul Perron, Roland Le Huenen, Stéphane Michon en hommage à Joseph Sablé* (Toronto: Centre d'Études Romantiques Joseph Sablé, 1996)
- Macnamara, Matthew, 'Femininity and Enclosure in Maupassant's *Nouvelles*', in *L'Hénaurme siècle. A Miscellany of Essays on Nineteenth-Century Literature*, ed. by W.L. McLendon (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1984), pp. 155-65
- Maneglier, Hervé, *Paris Impérial. La vie quotidienne sous le Second Empire* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1990)
- Masson, Bernard, 'Paris dans *L'Éducation sentimentale*: Rive Gauche, Rive Droite', in *Histoire et Langage dans "L'Éducation sentimentale" de Flaubert* (Paris: SEDES, 1981), pp.123-28
- Masson, Bernard, 'L'Eau et les rêves dans *l'Éducation sentimentale*', *Europe*, 47 (1969), 82-101, repr. in Bernard Masson, *Lectures de l'imaginaire* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1993), pp. 182-206
- Matlock, Jann, *Scenes of Seduction. Prostitution, Hysteria and Reading Difference in Nineteenth-Century France* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994)
- Maurin, Mario, 'Zola's Labyrinths', *Yale French Studies*, 42 (1969), 89-104
- McLendon, W.L., ed., *L'Hénaurme siècle. A Miscellany of Essays on Nineteenth-Century Literature* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1984)
- Miller, Michael, *The Bon Marché. Bourgeois Culture and the Department Store, 1869-1920* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1981)
- Mitterand, Henri, *L'Illusion réaliste* (Paris: Seuil, 1994)
- Moger, Angela, 'Narrative Structure in Maupassant: Frames of Desire', *PMLA*, 100 (1985), 315-27
- Nelson, Brian, *Zola and the Bourgeoisie. A Study of Themes and Techniques in Les Rougon-Macquart* (London: Macmillan, 1983)
- Nelson, Brian, 'Désir et consommation dans *Au Bonheur des Dames*', *Les Cahiers naturalistes*, 70 (1996), 19-34
- Noiray, Jacques, *Le Romancier et La Machine: l'image de la machine dans le roman français (1850-1900)*, 2 vols (Paris: Corti, 1981)

- Patrick, Jonathan, 'Des Esseintes / Des Essences?: Huysmans, Chemistry and Nature', in *La Nature dévoilée. French Literary Responses to Science*, ed. by Larry Duffy and Catherine Emerson (Hull: Department of French, University of Hull, 2000), pp. 105-18
- Pierrot, Jean, 'Espace et mouvement dans les récits de Maupassant', in *Flaubert et Maupassant écrivains normands: Actes du Colloque de Rouen* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1981), pp. 167-96
- Pinkney, David, *Napoleon III and the Rebuilding of Paris* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958)
- Plato, *Timaeus*, trans. by Benjamin Jowett, intr. by Glenn R. Morrow (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1949)
- Plessis, Alain, *De la fête impériale au mur des fédérés. 1852-1871* (Paris: Seuil, 1979)
- Plessis, Alain, 'La Curée et l'Haussmannisation de Paris', in *La Curée de Zola* (Paris: SEDES, 1987), pp. 97-105
- Poteau-Tralie, Mary L., *Voices of Authority. Criminal Obsession in Guy de Maupassant's Short Works* (New York: Peter Lang, 1994)
- Prendergast, Christopher, 'Flaubert: Writing and Negativity', *Novel*, 8 (1975), 197-213
- Prendergast, Christopher, 'Blurred Identities: The Painting of Modern Life', *French Studies*, 40 (1986), 401-12
- Prendergast, Christopher, *Paris and the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992)
- Reid, James H., *Narration and Description in the Nineteenth-Century French Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993)
- Ricatte, Robert, *La Genèse de "La Fille Élisa"* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1960)
- Rice, Shelley, *Parisian Views* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997)
- Rigby, Brian, ed., *French Literature, Thought and Culture in the Nineteenth Century. A Material World. Essays in Honour of D.G. Charlton* (London: Macmillan, 1993)
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, *Émile ou de l'Éducation* (1762) in *Œuvres Complètes*, 4 vols (Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1959-69), IV (1969)
- Schivelbusch, Wolfgang, *The Railway Journey. Trains and Travel in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980)
- Schmid, Marion, *Processes of Literary Creation: Flaubert and Proust* (Oxford: Legenda, 1998)

- Schor, Naomi, 'Zola: From Window to Window', *Yale French Studies*, 42 (1969), 38-51
- Seassau, Claude, *Émile Zola, le réalisme symbolique* (Paris: Corti, 1989)
- Sennett, Richard, *Flesh and Stone. The Body and the City in Western Civilization* (London: Faber and Faber, 1994)
- Serres, Michel, 'Turner traduit Carnot', in *Hermès III. La Traduction* (Paris: Minuit, 1974), pp. 233-42
- Serres, Michel, *Feux et signaux de brume. Zola* (Paris: Grasset et Fasquelle, 1975)
- Showalter, Elaine, *Hystories. Hysterical Epidemics and Modern Culture* (London: Picador, 1997)
- Sontag, Susan, *Illness as Metaphor* (1978), in *Illness as Metaphor; Aids and its Metaphors* (London: Penguin, 1991)
- Starobinski, Jean, 'L'Échelle des températures: Lecture du corps dans *Madame Bovary*', *Le Temps de la réflexion*, I (1980), 145-83, repr. in *Travail de Flaubert*, ed. G. Genette et T. Todorov (Paris: Seuil, 1983), pp. 45-78
- Steegmuller, Francis, *Maupassant: A Lion in the Path* (New York: Random House, 1949)
- Studeny, Christophe, *L'Invention de la vitesse. France, XVIIIe-XXe siècle* (Paris: Gallimard, 1995)
- Tanner, Tony, *City of Words. American Fiction 1950-1970* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1971)
- Terdiman, Richard, *Present Past. Modernity and the Memory Crisis* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993)
- Thorel-Cailleteau, Sylvie, *La tentation du livre sur rien. Naturalisme et décadence* (Paris: Éditions interuniversitaires, 1994)
- Tipper, P. A., 'Frédéric's "Pro-Coital" Cigarette: Causal Indeterminacy in *L'Éducation sentimentale*', *Neophilologus*, 80 (1996), 225-41
- Wajeman, Gérard, 'Psyché de la femme: note sur l'hystérique au XIXe siècle', *Romantisme*, 13-14 (1976), 57-66
- Watson, Janell, 'The Gendered Political Economy of Zola's *La Curée*', *Nineteenth-Century French Studies*, 25 (1997), 119-30
- Wetherill, M., 'Transgressions. Topographie et narration dans *La Bête humaine*', *Les Cahiers Naturalistes*, 70 (1996), 67-82

Williams, D.A., 'Sacred and Profane in *L'Éducation sentimentale*', *Modern Language Review*, 73 (1978), 786-98

Williams, D.A., *'The Hidden Life at its Source'. A Study of Flaubert's L'Éducation sentimentale* (Hull: Hull University Press, 1987)

Williams, Tony, and Mary Orr, *New Approaches in Flaubert Studies* (Lampeter: Mellen, 1999)

Wilson-Bareau, Juliet, *Manet, Monet, La gare Saint-Lazare* (Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1998)

Woollen, Geoff, 'Zola: La machine en tous ses effets', *Romantisme*, 41 (1983), 115-24

Woollen, Geoff, 'Zola's Thermodynamic Vitalism', *Romance Studies*, 3 (1985), 48-62