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BAILES, JULIA MARGUERITE

THE NATURALIST NOVEL: REALISM, IRONY, OR MYTH? AN ARCHETYPAL STUDY OF ZOLA'S "LA CUREE"

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THE NATURALIST NOVEL: REALISM, IRONY, OR MYTH?
AN ARCHETYPAL STUDY OF ZOLA'S LA CUREE

by

JULIA MARGUERITE BAILES

A THESIS SUBMITTED
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

APPROVED, THESIS COMMITTEE

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HOUSTON, TEXAS
APRIL, 1980
ABSTRACT

THE NATURALIST NOVEL: REALISM, IRONY, OR MYTH?

AN ARCHETYPAL STUDY OF ZOLA'S LA CUREE

by

JULIA MARGUERITE BAILES

The series of the Rougon-Macquart is the grand epic of the nineteenth century. As in the series that comprise the earlier, classical epics, each link in the chain can stand alone and be examined separately from the rest. La Curée, the second novel in the series, is particularly interesting for, in it, a naturalist novel--itself an ironic form--Zola has written a myth in the true sense of the word.

An archetypal study of La Curée reveals three distinct and definite stories recounting the Quests of three distinct and definite heroes. All of these heroes follow the pattern of what Joseph Campbell calls the Monomyth, the universal, metaphorical rendering of the explanation of life. This Monomyth is the story of the Hero's Quest and always entails certain steps: separation from society (especially mother), initiation (tests and trials), and return to society, the Hero bringing with him the boon of knowledge gleaned from the Quest.

The myth of La Curée, like the universal Monomyth, has a specific structure: it is quite definitely circular and cyclical. The novel is circular in physical structure
and the themes of death and rebirth, construction and destruction and the continual round of the phases of time recur in cyclical fashion.

Zola's mixed use of demonic and apocalyptic imagery throughout is a further indication of the author's feeling (conscious or unconscious) for the mythic form within the guise of the ironic novel.

Zola's desire to write a great epic succeeded in The Rougon-Macquart series, but his writing of La Curée shows that he was more than a scientist observing the history of a family--he was an imaginative author capable of explaining his world and survival in it, just as the classics and primitives explain theirs, through the metaphysical restatement of the Monomyth, the only truly universal art form.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The following people were instrumental in my completion of this study, and I would like to thank them wholeheartedly:
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Dr Valentini Brady-Papadopoulou, who was generous with her time, her ideas, and her work, and who has encouraged me for the past six years—with her intelligence, her concern and her understanding—to continue writing.
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I would like to extend my very special thanks to Dr Patrick Brady. His goodwill, generosity, and encouragement were indispensable in my completing this project. But, beyond this, it was he who introduced me to Emile Zola and to new criticism at a time when discouragement was coloring my view of French literature as a whole. His enthusiasm for, and
interest in the subject and more importantly in his students, has been the greatest boost to my morale and my enthusiasm for and interest in my own work. His help and concern, far beyond the call of duty, will always be remembered with gratitude and warmth.
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'"--Mais Zola n'est pas un réaliste, madame! C'est un poète! dit Mme de Guermantes (...).
--Zola un poète!
--Mais oui, répondit en riant la duchesse (...). Que Votre Altesse remarque comme il grandit tout ce qu'il touche. Vous me direz qu'il ne touche justement qu'à ce qui ... porte bonheur! Mais il en fait quelque chose d'immense; il a le furieux épique! C'est l'Homère de la vandange! Il n'a pas assez de majuscules pour écrire le mot de Cambronne."

A la recherche du temps perdu, 
II, 499

(quoted as epigraph in P. Brady: 
Le Bouc émissaire chez Emile Zola, 
forthcoming)
INTRODUCTION

In the art of fiction, it is common to note numerous structures and modes which have been variously categorized by literary critics for many years. They have been called: tragedy, comedy, romance, irony, satire; lyric, poetry, drama, prose, epos, mythos; classicism, realism, romanticism, naturalism, symbolism and the various other "isms".

One of the most influential of these classifications has been set forth in a series of essays by Northrop Frye called *Anatomy of Criticism*.\(^1\) In one of these essays, he divides fiction into five modes, classifying them by the hero's power of action. At one end of the scale is the mode which he calls the Mythic Mode. In it the hero is superior in kind to other men and to their environment, he is a god. Frye says that this mode is usually found outside of normal literary classifications. At the other end of his scale, he places the Ironic Mode. In this mode the hero is inferior to common humanity in power or intelligence. The reader (or the author) feels as if he is looking down on the hero or on the situations, or he might feel

as if he could himself be faced with the same situations and be judged by greater standards. Most literature of the past hundred years, says Frye, has tended toward this mode.¹

Most critics who have divided literature into different categories seem to consider their categories as in some way separate and autonomous in literary history. It is my contention that while Mr Frye's modes may well be valid, as far as they go, they are in no way mutually exclusive. (Of course, since Mr Frye calls the last mode "ironic", and since irony never says exactly what it means, it would seem that he agrees.)

A story in the ironic mode, then, as a Zola story for instance ought to be in Frye's system (Zola's announced theory of naturalism puts him in the role of the experimental scientist and his characters in the roles of microbes in a test tube), is also something other than what it appears to be. It follows that Zola's alleged (and claimed) attempt to describe life exactly as it is, from the position of a "detached recorder of the human scene,"² is a technique

¹Frye, Anatomy, pp. 33-35. This last observation of Mr Frye's thus appears to postulate a break in the mid-nineteenth century (beginning with Flaubert?). Eliade, on the other hand, sees the nineteenth century novel as a whole as "le grand réservoir des mythes dégradés." Mircea Eliade, Images et Symboles (Paris: Gallimard, 1952), p. 12.

²Frye, ibid., p. 49. A reader of Zola's novels (as opposed to his theoretical proclamations, which always have a boutade quality about them) will not readily fall into
similar to the trompe-l'oeil of a painter. It deceives
the eye, seems to be one thing and is in reality another.

But when Mr Frye says that myth, on the one hand,
and the attempt at verisimilitude and descriptive accuracy
on the other, are two opposing poles of literature, I must
disagree. The ironic mode, Zola's medium (according to
Frye), can be a mask, an outer shell; the inner being and
structure is that of myth. A representation or imitation
of life can merely be a disguise for a myth in the larger
sense. If myth is the "imitation of actions near or at the
conceivable limits of desire", why can it not be couched
in verisimilitude?

Myth is implicit metaphor: identity; while realism

the trap of imagining he is "detached." Moreover, if in
1866 he declares "Le mot 'réaliste' ne signifie rien pour moi
qui déclare subordonner le réel au tempérament", twenty
years later he is still extolling "le lyrisme, le coup
d'oeil qui résume la synthèse, emporte et grandit." See
Patrick Brady, "L'Oeuvre" d'Emile Zola, roman sur les arts

1 On page 51 of Anatomy of Criticism, Mr Frye says
just this. "Our survey of fictional modes has also shown
us that ... the tendency to verisimilitude and accuracy of
description, is one of two poles of literature. At the
other pole is something that seems to be connected ... with
the usual meaning of myth." Later, he says "In our tradi-
tion we have a place for verisimilitude, for human experi-
ence skilfully and consistently imitated. ... At the other
extreme, we have myths ... ", p. 135, and again: "Myth,
then, is one extreme of literary design; naturalism is the
other", p. 136.

2 Ibid., p. 136.
is implicit simile: like real life. So, if my contention is correct--i.e., if both of these modes, the mythic and the ironic, can co-exist in the same work--then there must be some displacement of myth towards reality, or vice versa: a displacement of reality towards myth.¹ This, I propose to argue, is the case with Emile Zola's *La Curée*. It is possible for the real to reveal the mythic.²

Undisplaced modes can be sub-divided into two intermediate categories, the apocalyptic--represented by heaven, human desire, and good; and the demonic--represented by hell, the world rejected by desire, pain, confusion, and evil. The latter, the demonic, is more proper to the ironic mode, while the former is more proper to the mythic mode. These sub-divisions, or alternate categories, I feel, operate dialectically throughout literature (as they co-exist in life), and in accepting the premise that both myth and ironic realism can be present in the same piece of literature, one also accepts that both alternate categories must also be present. This study proposes to show just such duality in the novel to be treated.

¹Frye does not disagree with this attitude. In a later essay he says that "Ironic literature begins with realism and tends toward myth..."*, p. 140, *Anatomy of Criticism*.

Mr Frye indicates that in realistic literature the association of real heroes with mythic heroes (displacement) is incidental, coincidental, or accidental— but this does not mean that it is any less actual or significant. In other words, just because an author did not say he was setting out to write a myth doesn't mean that he didn't write one nonetheless.

It is the intention of this study to examine the narrative, the form and structure, and the implications of one of the novels of perhaps the most ironic (by Professor Frye's definition) of authors and show how truly mythic it can be. The author of course, is, as I have already indicated, Émile Zola, and the novel is _La Curée_.

In a study of any novel written by Émile Zola, one is reminded of his claimed intention in writing an "experimental novel". The author supposedly "objectively" records what he observes. Many critics of Zola regard his works from just this point of view; and even then they neglect one of the earliest and most interesting novels from the Rougon-Macquart series, _La Curée_, almost entirely.

1Frye, _Anatomy_, p. 137.

2In the same tradition, see P. Brady, "Archetypal and Myth Criticism and _Manon Lescaut_", _Forum_, 1980.

If they speak of this work at all, it is either parenthetically or as just another historical novel\(^1\) whose sources must be discovered.\(^2\) A close study of structure and meaning in *La Curée* shows that what so many of the critics fail to realize (or decline to write about) is that Zola was not just a "detached recorder of the human scene"\(^3\); he was also a brilliant author who analyzed the physical and psychological development of his subjects as well as recording their behavior. What's more, this was not done in the least clinically. Zola chose to write, throughout his work, in universalities; his books, therefore, become more than individual or family case studies. They are universal truths that touch our own lives though we are far removed in time and space.

R. A. Rosenberg realized this and wrote a fascinating thesis on one of these universal themes in five of Zo-

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\(^1\)Even a much more historical and heavily documented novel may have a powerful mythic dimension. See P. Brady, "Archetypes and the Historical Novel: The Case of Salammbô", *Stanford French Review*, vol. I, no. 3 (Winter, 1977), pp. 313-324.

\(^2\)Robert Lethbridge has written an interesting article on *La Curée*, but, as noted, his interest is strictly in the history of the work and not in the work itself. See Robert Lethbridge, "Du Nouveau sur la genèse de La Curée", *Cahiers Naturalistes*, 19\(^{e}\) année, (1973), pp. 23-30.

\(^3\)Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, p. 49. See also Patrick Brady, "L'Oeuvre d'Emile Zola", pp. 80-81.
la's novels. However, she does not touch on *La Curée*, the novel to be treated here. Since we voluntarily limit ourselves to one novel, as opposed to the five that Rosenberg examines, we can delve more deeply into the work and its universal aspects. In so doing, we see that Zola goes farther in his effort for universal truth than many suspect. He takes archetypal themes and elements and weaves them artfully, not into a clinical report, but into one of the most ancient and universal literary (and psychological) forms: the myth.

Some critics have spoken of myth in relation to Zola, but their studies, again, are more historical in nature. Unlike Walker and Pasco, we are not concerned with Zola's allusions to classical myths, nor with a comparison of his work to specific classical myths (the possibilities of both of which abound in *La Curée*); what this study reveals is that *La Curée* is a modern myth, with all the structure, content and psychological truths which are "universally valid.

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for all human minds".¹ as they are present in the Myth.

One of the very few studies which does treat of this type of archetypal element in Zola's work is an article by Patrick Brady on mythic structures in Germinal.² In it he speaks of three levels of such structuring: fertility, initiation, and liberation (politics). This study does not, of course, treat these elements in La Curée.

The term "myth", like many others, has been over-used and abused to the point that it is difficult, if not impossible to properly define. We have already seen Mr Frye's modes of literature, but it is not merely a mode of literature which concerns us here; it is rather a pattern for life and literature.

Webster's Dictionary says that myth is a "story that is usually of unknown origin . . . that ostensibly relates historical events usually of such character as to serve to explain some practice, belief, institution, or natural phenomenon. . . . The theme or plot of a mythical tale occurring in forms differing only in detail."³ According


to the dictionary definition, then, the myth does not necessarily have to relate the work of the classical gods, as we have so often heard it said; it can be a story of ostensibly historical events, as is Zola's.

It is a misuse of the word, albeit a common one, to say that myth is a primitive fiction of godly deeds, or opinions based on false reasoning. Myth, like all great literature, reflects instead a more profound reality.

Mark Schorer writes that "Myth is fundamental, the dramatic representation of our deepest instinctual life, of a primary awareness of man in the universe, capable of many configurations, upon which all particular opinions and attitudes depend." Alan W. Watts has said in *Myth and Ritual in Christianity* that "Myth is to be defined as a complex of stories--some no doubt fact, and some fantasy--which for various reasons, human beings regard as demonstrations of the inner meaning of the universe and of human life." George Whalley tells us in *Poetic Process* that myth

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is a direct metaphysical statement beyond science. It embodies in an articulated structure of symbol or narrative a vision of reality. It is a condensed account of man's Being and attempts to represent reality with structural fidelity, to indicate at a single stroke the salient and fundamental relations which for man constitute reality... Myth is not an obscure, oblique, or elaborate way of expressing reality--it is the only way.¹

Using Whalley's definition, then, myth does not preclude realism or reality. It is reality. And so La Curée is reality--both on the surface and in its deepest dimension.

According to many anthropologists and cultural anthropologists, among them Bruno Bettelheim, Mircea Eliade,² and Joseph Campbell, all myths throughout spoken tradition and literature, from the vastly different cultures and places on earth, have a remarkably similar structure; the individual differences between mythologies of different places and races being merely "local manifestations of the universal forms."³ Franz Boas in his The Mind of Primitive Man (first edition) said that "certain patterns of associated


ideas may be recognized in all types of culture."¹ Ananda K. Coomaraswamy writes that myth is the "penultimate truth, of which all experience is the temporal reflection. The mythical narrative is of timeless and placeless validity, true however and everywhere. ..."²

Primitive cultures have always had some means by which to transcend the commonplace, but in modern times, in a world where transcendence is lost, artists (and other humans) must search for other means of transcending the ugliness of everyday life. To do so successfully, an artist must create a new work explaining the world as the ancients did theirs, using the old transcendent forms. While, as Lukács says, the novel is "an expression of this transcendent dental homelessness"³, La Curée is quite surely an effort to overcome the homelessness and to re-discover epic transcendence through that metaphorical form, the myth.

Joseph Campbell has written a long and brilliant monograph on the myth called The Hero with a Thousand Faces, in which he tells us that there is "astonishingly little

¹Quoted in ibid., p. 15.
variation in the morphology of the [myth]."¹ Campbell explains in detail and with diverse examples this morphology or suprastructure of the myth. He calls this common structure, this skeleton to which all myth conforms, the Monomyth. Individual myths merely flesh out the skeleton in various ways, "differing," as Webster's says, "only in detail."²

What follows is an explanation of this Monomyth and how Zola, in his own fascinating way, conformed to the structure and, more importantly, to the meaning of that universal art form.


²Gove, Webster's, p. 1497.
PART ONE

THE NARRATIVE OF THE MYTH:

THE MONOMYTH
The story of the Monomyth is that of a Hero and his exploits: his Quest for something greater than himself, his initiation into society, or both. The definitions of the term "Hero" are many and varied. A hero can be merely the leading character in a story: as Frye says, "In literary fictions the plot consists of somebody doing something. The somebody, if an individual, is the hero..."\(^1\)

This definition is, however, much too general. So we turn to a dictionary definition. William Morris, in his Dictionary of the English Language, says that he is "in mythology and legend, a man ... who is endowed with great courage and strength, celebrated for his bold exploits and favored by the gods."\(^2\) Campbell expands:

The hero ... is the man or woman who has been able to battle past his personal and local historical limitations to the generally valid, normally human forms. Such a one's visions, ideas, and inspirations come pristine from the primary springs of human life and thought. Hence they are eloquent, not of the present, disintegrating society and psyche, but of the unquenched source through which society is reborn. The hero has died as a modern man; but as eternal man... unspecific, universal man -- he has been reborn. His second solemn task and deed therefore (as

\(^1\)Frye, Anatomy of Criticism, p. 33.

Toynbee declares and as all the mythologies of mankind indicate) is to return to us, transfigured, and teach the lesson he has learned of life renewed.1

In this definition we get a glimpse of the structure of the Monomyth. But let us go into detail.

The Quest, or the Hero's adventure, is composed of three basic stages: Departure, Initiation, and Return. Within each stage are several steps to be taken before that stage can be completed. The structure is as follows:

1. Departure or Separation from the World
   a. The Call to Adventure (which may or may not be refused)
   b. Supernatural or Unexpected Help
   c. Passage into the Realm of Night (Descent into the Underworld)2

1Campbell, Hero, pp. 19-20. It should not be assumed from any of these definitions that all heroes are pure, sterling or righteous characters. Their goal may simply be to take society from one plane of evil to another; or their own evil ends may lead to some future good. They may be evil incarnate, or merely men with faults and perversions more or less like our own. Campbell says it: "...the figures worshipped in the temples of the world are by no means always beautiful, always benign, or even necessarily virtuous. Like the deity of the Book of Job, they far transcend the scales of human value. And likewise mytholo-gy does not hold as its greatest hero the merely virtuous man", p. 44.

2Campbell calls this stage "The Belly of the Whale."
2. Initiation
   a. Trials and Tests
   b. The Meeting with the Goddess (Magna Mater, the Terrible Mother, and/or Woman as Temptress as in the Oedipal and Phaedra myths)
   c. Atonement with the Father
   d. Apotheosis and Attainment of the Ultimate Boon

3. Return
   a. Refusal of the Return
   b. Rescue from Without
   c. Crossing the Return Threshold
   d. Master of the Two Worlds

La Curée has extremely interesting possibilities when studied from the point of view of the Monomyth, because it is really three separate stories, each story with a hero, and each hero with a Quest: we have Saccard and his quest for the accumulation of wealth; Maxime and his desire to enter his father's society and spend his wealth; and Renée and her quest for unattainable pleasure.

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1 These categories are described in many places, notably in Guerin, et.al., Handbook, pp. 120-121; Harrison "Symbolism of the Cyclical Myth in Endymion", in Myth and Literature, John B. Vickery ed., pp. 230-232. Most of the categories here conform roughly to those detailed in Campbell, Hero, pp. IX-X, 36, 245-246, among others.

2 The characters of Maxime Rougon and Aristide Saccard appear in a later work in the Rougon-Macquart series, L'Argent, and their later exploits could form the basis for a very interesting study. We do, however, limit ourselves here to La Curée.
CHAPTER ONE

SACARD AS HERO OF THE MONOMYTH: SACARD SUCCEED!

The first (chronologically) of our three heroes receive the Call to Adventure is Aristide Rougon Saccard. From his childhood home in Plassans, Aristide hears the call, manifested in an invitation sent by his brother, to join the latter in Paris where untold wealth is available for the taking. From the first paragraph of his story, we see the golden object of Aristide's quest is never left to the imagination.

Typical of the mythical hero whose "familiar life horizon has been outgrown; the old concepts, ideals, emotional patterns no longer [fitting]" ¹, Aristide Rougon understands somehow, as he is outgrowing the society and the provincials he has known, that they are somehow "wr (in his context) and that he is too great for them. "La misérable vie de province, ses fautes surtout, dont il dait la société ...responsable"², was destined to end. The man seems to know that the time has come to leave his home.

¹Campbell, Hero, p. 51.

²Emile Zola, La Curée (Paris: Garnier-Flammarie, 1970), p. 78. Further references to La Curée will appear as page numbers in parentheses immediately following any citations.
to part from what was known and to search out his goal, his aim in life -- the gold of Paris. "Il éprouva l'apré besoin de courir Paris, de battre de ses gros souliers de provincial ce pavé brûlant d'où il comptait faire jaillir des millions. C'était une vraie prise de possession." (77-78) He is determined, more than that, he is obsessed, inexorable, relentless; he knows exactly what he wants and sets out immediately on his quest, "par ruse ou par violence" (78) to get exactly that.

Although he will be leaving his home, his society, and everything he knows, to go to a "zone unknown", a "region of both treasure and danger",¹ there is no hesitation. Aristide Rougon does not refuse the Call. On the contrary, a man with boundless ambition, Rougon will assail the unknown land, Paris, from the moment he arrives.

It is not unusual for a hero, while wandering through the netherworld between home and the new realm of adventure, to turn back. We already see Aristide Rougon, however, as a man who, once he has accepted the challenge, will not falter and will not accept defeat.

Il accourait, enrageant d'avoir fait fausse route, maudissant la province, parlant de Paris avec ses appétits de loup, jurant "qu'il ne serait plus si bête"; et le sourire aigu dont il accompagnait ces mots prenait une terrible signification sur ces lèvres minces. (77)

The first encounter of the hero's Quest adventure

¹Campbell, Hero, p. 58.
is with a supernatural protector (often an old man or a
crone) who helps him overcome his enemies and pass the tests
necessary to accomplish complete initiation and attain his
goal. Rougon's protector is his brother. "Aristide, en
venant à Paris, avait surtout compté sur Eugène, qui, après
avoir été un des agents les plus actifs du coup d'État,
était à cette heure une puissance occulte..." (78).

The outside helper is often described as a Seer
who can at times sense future events. He is seemingly all-
knowing. Having no pre-knowledge of Aristide's arrival,
Eugene's first words to his brother are: "Ah! c'est toi,
je t'attendais", and then, almost ominously, "toutes les
fautes se réparent. Tu es plein d'avenir..." (79). This
announcement is indeed true. The hero has a future and a
good one. He knows the object of his quest and is intent
upon getting it; he has journeyed far from his homeland;
he has a protector -- nearly everything that is needed to
complete his quest. But what follows immediately is not
the future that Aristide Rougon had envisioned.

The mythical protector offers amulets and advice
to the hero, thereby helping him against opposing forces.
But the Great Teacher, as the protector is sometimes por-
trayed, is also frequently misunderstood. The advice that
Aristide receives is most unwelcome -- of the all-good-
things-come-to-him-who-waits type; and along with such
sage advice, we are told that Eugene offers him an occasional "pièce de vingt francs" (79). Although our hero doesn't fully realize it at the time, that advice is to be the road to his success. And what could be a more effective amulet (and incentive) than a portion, however small, of the object of the quest? Indeed, despite the hero's initial disappointment this Protector is a good one, representing as he does the "protecting power of destiny."¹

Although he complies with it, Aristide finds Eugene's advice to wait quite intolerable. The waiting seems interminable. Aristide has borrowed money from his father-in-law, but it is swiftly running out. His wife spends money quickly and his daughter must be provided for as well. He has been described from the first as a bird of prey, a hungry wolf; now, as the weeks pass, the beast, starving for what he has come for—the gold of Paris—is forced to watch it flow past his window day after day, while all he can do is wait!

After weeks of seemingly endless waiting for his protector's aid, our hero is finally summoned—but to what a disappointing interview! Eugene has found him a position, but a lowly one; unfit, thinks Aristide, for someone such as he. The advice again is to wait.

¹Campbell, Hero, p. 71.
Toi et tes pareils, si nous vous laissions faire, vous viderez les coffres avant même qu'ils fussent pleins. Eh! bon Dieu! aie quelque patience! ...prenez au moins la peine de te baisser pour ramasser une fortune. (80-81)

Concealed in this word of advice lies the future of Aristeide Rougon. He will wait, he will lower himself now in order to raise himself in the future, and he will use the same means upon the city and the society he is out to change. He will tear it down in order to build it up again, kill it to have it reborn again, and all as part and parcel of his real motive—the garnering of personal wealth.

Not infrequently in myth we see the supernatural (and dangerous) side to the "mercurial" figure of the protector. And this is true with Eugene, who goes a step beyond being prophet, wise old man, and sage. In handing out further advice the helper would have himself seen as almost Supernatural, almost all-powerful. He endows his brother with permission to go on with the quest, but warns—no, threatens—that strict legality must be observed, that the "initiate" must follow the rules to the letter, or the spell is broken. One word of scandal and the help is withdrawn. This advice has an awesome effect on our hero. "Cet-

1Campbell, Hero, p. 73.

2Zola, La Curée, on page 81 we find: "Maintenant retiens bien ce qu'il me reste à te dire. Nous entrons dans un temps où toutes les fortunes sont possibles. Gagne beaucoup d'argent, je te le permets; seulement pas de bêtise, pas de scandale trop bruyant, ou je te supprime."
te menace produisit l'effet que ses promesses n'avaient pu amener. Toute la fièvre d'Aristide se ralluma à la pensée de cette fortune dont son frère lui parlait. Il lui sembla qu'on ... (l'autorise) à égorger les gens, mais légalement, sans trop les faire crier " (81-82). Our hero now has permission to do nearly anything in order to further his quest. Like a nineteenth-century James Bond (or a classical god), he has a "license to kill" so long as he is careful to ensure that his victims don't scream too loudly.

The new land through which the hero must travel on his dangerous journey is fraught with both treasures and horrors.¹ The worst horror of all, for Aristide, has been to see the treasures without being able to possess them. "Etre pauvre à Paris, c'est être pauvre deux fois" (82). And still he must wait, postponing his quest, seeking out the exact moment, for in scandal his victims might scream and he would lose what he most needs—the help of his Guide through the land of miracles.

With the help of his protector, the hero has come to the Threshold of the Adventure; but, before he can cross the threshold to the new Zone of Power, he must first pass a Guardian, who may act either as a guide and helper, or as a very dangerous guard against entry.

¹For a more extensive discussion of this see Campbell, Hero, p. 58, and Harrison, "Symbolism of the Cyclical Myth", p. 235.
Mr Campbell tells us of this menacing being. He/she is the guardian of the threshold and stands "at the entrance to the zone of magnified power."¹ He/she represents the limit of the hero's present domain; beyond lies the darkness of the unknown and the treasures of the underworld. He/she is described variously among primitive peoples. To some, it is "half man": a creature with only one side, invisible from the other. This creature is dangerous and unpredictable when confronted—at times offering medicines and help and at other times killing its victims.² To some she is a little old crone, to some the Spider Woman, a benign figure—old, dressed in black—bestowing charms and teaching magic formulae.³ In Russia, this woman is spoken of as one of the Wild Women, a group of supernaturals who sometimes wed mortals; and who, when offended, disappear, taking their supernatural aid with them.⁴

The Arcadian god Pan is a manifestation of this Threshold Guardian. He instills groundless fright in some of his adventurers. Pan, beneficial to those who worship him, was

¹Campbell, Hero, p. 77.

²Ibid., p. 78.


⁴Campbell, Hero, p. 80.
also the god who was able to bestow both wisdom and frenzy, "that divine 'enthusiasm' that overturns the reason and releases the forces of the destructive-creative dark."\(^1\)

The hero knows that in dealing with this guardian he assumes great risks. Some heroes possess the courage it takes to deal with the guardian, and thereby acquire the powers that this being may bestow. Others are not so fortunate.

The guardian in our story takes on some of the characteristics of all the archetypal guardians we have described. She is a woman of indeterminate age, forever seeming older than she is because of her bearing and her habit of perpetually wearing black. Her demeanor is indeed that of an old crone.

Elle était sèche comme une facture, froide comme un protège, indifférente et brutale au fond comme un recors. (89)
...on l'eût jugée beaucoup plus vieille. A la vérité elle n'avait pas d'âge. Elle portait une éternelle robe noire, limée au plis, fripée et blanche par l'usage... Coiffée d'un chapeau noir qui lui descendait jusqu'au front...chaussée de gros souliers, elle trottaît par les rues, tenant au bras un panier.... Ce panier, qui ne la quittait jamais, était tout un monde. (87)

She has a habitation: a little boutique with an apartment upstairs; but she is rarely to be found within. Early we are led to suspect, and later to know, that she is an "en-

\(^1\)Campbell, *Hero*, pp. 81-82.
tremetteuse", a sort of glorified procuress for the upper class men and women to whom she caters.

The guardian, being nearly unfailingly described in mythology as libidinous and given to seduction,¹ Madame Touche (a singularly appropriate name for such a woman), more interested in watching than in participating, is perfectly suited for this role. Her boutique is dark and dirty, highly evocative of a cave dwelling, and there is a hidden passageway up to the bedroom,² which she lends out to her clients, and of which she alone is custodian. A true voyeuse, "vivant chez les autres, dans les affaires des autres...elle savait des choses (les) plus délicates..." (88). With her knowledge, she could, of course, have been very wealthy; but we are told that she works cheaply for love of her art.

The mythic figure of the partially invisible half-man guardian is well-represented by the character of Mme Sidonie, as she prefers to be called. This somehow frightening creature of mythology is characterized by partial invisibility, and Mme Sidonie certainly qualifies. In her

¹Campbell, Hero, p. 80.

²Symbolism, that can easily be interpreted as sexual, abounds in the passage: the rich laces she purportedly sells, the darkness of the rooms, the mysterious hidden passageway which the laces veil, the ornateness at the end of the passageway (the bedroom), the basket she always carries, her very name, all by way of introducing this vicious hermaphrodite.
ubiquitous black outfit, she blends into the grey background of Paris. She is "pâle," "petite," "maigre, blafarde," with a "sourire éteint," "allures timides et discrètes," (89) and most often the term "vague" is used in her descriptions. In one place we read of "ce petit être pâle et vague dont la face entière semblait loucher et se fondre" (90). We have already seen that her personality does nothing to hinder her invisibility. She has no life of her own, living as she does vicariously through the assignations of others—and she is so discreet about them that everyone virtually ignores her presence.

But Zola goes even farther in his descriptions; he actually tells us that she is half-man—just as Mr Campbell describes the threshold guardian. In a client's eyes, "elle ... devenait son homme d'affaires..." (88). The author continues in that vein: "La femme se mourait en elle; elle n'était plus qu'un agent d'affaires ... on l'eût prise pour un saute-ruisseau déguisée en fille ... le tempérament ... s'était déjeté pour produire cet hermaphrodisme étrange de la femme devenue être neutre, homme d'affaires et entre-metteuse à la fois" (88-90).

As other heroes before him have done, Saccard\(^1\) rec-

\(^1\)Eliade tells us that neophytes during initiation take on new names to symbolize their dying to the old condition. See Myths, Dreams and Mysteries, p. 199, and elsewhere. Aristide Rougon changes his name to Saccard on entering the new world, to better suit his new life.
ognizes this guardian for what she is, and determines right-
ly that he could make good use of such a powerful personage. 
After having made some plans of his own and having decided 
how to make his first money, he thinks immediately of this 
woman, Sidonie Rougon Touche, Saccard's own sister. "Quand 
Saccard, après avoir arrêté son plan, se mit en quête des 
premiers fonds, il songea naturellement à sa soeur" (90). 
He knows that she could help him enter into a realm of pow-
er. There, he feels, his own efforts would be effective in 
accelerating him towards his goal. But this realm has so 
far been forbidden to him. Our hero is correct in his as-
se ssment of his sister-guardian. She knows things which 
he does not know: that there is still one more requirement 
which he must fulfill before entering the desired kingdom.

Although never enumerated as such in La Curée, the 
rules and regulations which a hero must follow in his ini-
tiation and quest are explicit. One of the most important, 
as we have seen, is that of following the protector's ex-
hortations to the letter. Another, leaving the old society, 
is something Aristide believes he has done. In all mytho-
logy, however, as well as in the ritual and tradition of 
primitive groups, complete and utter separation from soci-
ety requires leaving behind all women belonging to that so-
ciety;¹ yet Aristide has brought his wife and daughter

¹In tribal initiations the boy leaves his mother
with him to Paris.

We sense that the hero knows that he has only partially fulfilled the requirements for heroic initiation on his way to Paris. It would seem that he knows instinctively what all young boys of primitive societies know from early childhood:\footnote{This is not unusual for future initiates. The well-researched and currently popular novel \textit{Roots} by Alex Haley emphasizes the fact that all who are to pass through the adventures of initiation in the tribes of Africa know (with mixed feelings) in advance much of what is to take place. "Not a day passed that Kunta and his mates didn't feel both anxiety and joy at the approach of the next harvest festival with the taking away of the third kafo... to a place far away... (from which) they would return after four moons, as men." Alex Haley, \textit{Roots} (Garden City: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1976), p. 73. See also Bruno Bettelheim, \textit{Symbolic Wounds} (London: Thames and Hudson, 1955), a chapter entitled "Initiation and Adolescent Ambivalence," pp. 93-96 and p. 16.} women cannot accompany men to their initiation space.\footnote{Mircea Eliade, \textit{Naissances mystiques} (Paris: Gallimard, 1959), p. 26, pp. 31-36, a section called "Séparation d'avec la mère." And this is serious. "Si une femme, disait un chef Kurnai..., voyait ces choses, ou entendait ce que nous disons aux garçons, je la tuerais ", p. 31.} Zola tells us this when he writes of Aristide, "...une femme et une enfant lui semblaient déjà un poids écrasant..." (77). But whether Saccard knows it or not, the guardian Sidonie does know, and tells him in so many words that she could help him, "si tu n'étais pas marié..." (91).

and the other women of the village to be taken away in order to become a man. Here our hero must leave his wife and daughter before the quest can be truly begun.
There is nothing the guardian can to do help, nor can she allow him to cross the threshold into the desired land until he complies with all the regulations.

It is not long, however, before fate steps in and gives Saccard a hand. Angèle, Saccard's first wife, is taken suddenly ill. It is never revealed outright that the wealth obsession of her husband, along with the months of neglect in a strange city, has brought about the malady, nor is it stated that the evening the couple spent in a restaurant beside the Seine -- Saccard forgetting his previous discretion and ranting about his intention to murder Paris, to slice it into quarters, to pull out its entrails and hack it into pieces, open its veins and watch its agony -- actually has caused her illness. But how can we fail to suspect it? An innocent, taken to an unknown place only to see her husband become madly obsessed by a cruel and murderous idée fixe, and moreover to see Paris itself as an accomplice, cannot hope to emerge unscathed. Or could

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1 On page 91 we read, "Paris, qu'une guerre lointaine n'émouvait pas, se jetait avec plus d'emportement dans la spéculacion et les filles. Saccard assistait, en se rongeant les poings, à cette rage croissante qu'il avait prédue. Dans la forge géante, les marteaux qui battaient l'or sur l'enclume lui donnaient des secousses de colère et d'impatience. Il y avait en lui une telle tension de l'intelligence et de la volonté, qu'il vivait dans un songe, en somnambule se promenant au bord des toits sous le fouet d'une idée fixe." Paris seems to be tempting and taunting Saccard, pushing him forward towards his goal.
it be that, like the women in primitive tribes who accompany men to the sacred Initiation place, she must die for having done so? In any case, we feel she does the only thing a truly mythological character in her position could do: she dies.

Fate seems to be always smiling on Saccard, nudging him along on the right path through his initiation. He does not expressly leave his women behind, but Providence brings it about. Again, the hero is helped by some supernatural protection. Ironically, Saccard often seems to misinterpret fate's help. Here he is irritated to find that his wife is ill, but it is not long before he actually brings about her death, however inadvertently, only in order to enter into the region being opened to him by his guardian. Zola tells us this outright.

One night, as Angèle lies sick upon her bed, Mme Sidonie appears. She had been tending to her sister-in-law, but recently, inexplicably, "Mme Sidonie avait abandonné les potions, laissant le mal faire son oeuvre" (92). The guardian is helping destiny along, opening the gate to

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1 See note 2, page before last, and Eliade, Nais-
sances mystiques, p. 31.

2 "Aussi fut-il surpris et irrité de trouver, un soir, Angèle malade et couchée. Sa vie d'intérieur ... se dérangeait, ce qui l'exaspéra comme une méchanceté cal-
culée de la destinée." (91) The irony here, of course, is that destiny is calculating, but to Saccard's benefit.
the promised land ever so slightly.

She soon swings the door open wide by telling Aristide in full earshot of his dying wife that she has already arranged for an immediate marriage between him and a young girl from a wealthy family, who will undoubtedly bring him a large dowry and social position -- the "magical aids" needed for the accomplishment of the quest. We see in this passage the analogue to a guardian telling the hero that he cannot enter until he has "put away his childish things"; i.e., his women.

Angèle has, of course, overheard this odious conversation. Afraid at first lest they hasten her end, then, as if understanding that it was all a part of some greater scheme, the meek and gentle Mme Saccard passes obediently away, aiding (in her own way) the hero in this last preliminary charge, and leaving him to his quest.

Les yeux d'Angèle disaient qu'elle avait entendu la conversation de son mari avec Mme Sidonie, et qu'elle craignait qu'il ne l'étranglât, si elle ne mourait pas assez vite. Et il y avait encore, dans ses yeux, l'horrible étonnement d'une nature douce et inoffensive s'apercevant, à la dernière heure, des infamies de ce monde, frissonant à la pensée des longues années passées côte à côte avec un bandit. Peu à peu, son regard devint plus doux; elle n'eut plus peur, elle dut excuser ce misérable, en songeant à la lutte acharnée qu'il livrait depuis si longtemps à la fortune. (94-95)

Mme Sidonie, in the true form of a guide and mentor, proceeds to take over the moment that Saccard is alone.
This extremely dangerous guardian,¹ who has already hastened the death of one person, if not actually caused it, seizes the opportunity to direct the ritual surrounding the crossing of the threshold. Here she is anxious to direct the death room and prepare the funeral arrangements, and then to coordinate the plans for the upcoming, immediate, wedding of Aristide Rougon Saccard to another young woman, helping him with all the provisions of the marriage contract.

Aristide, having been widowed and having then sent his daughter off to live with relatives, has now passed all of the initiation pre-requisites for the quest; he has even changed his name to better suit the character of the adventure. He is therefore anxious to follow his guardian's instructions to the letter. His desire to get on with the quest overcomes any hesitation he might have felt, and in marrying Renée he crosses the long-awaited threshold. His happiness is unbounded. "Et Aristide Saccard, triomphant, la joue vermeille, comme engraisssé en trois journées par les premiers sourires de la fortune, occupait

¹"One had better not challenge the watcher of the established bounds. ... the powers that watch at the boundary are dangerous; to deal with them is risky; yet ... such demons -- at once dangers and bestowers of magic power--every hero must encounter who steps an inch outside the walls of his tradition." Campbell, Hero, pp. 82-83.
...un coquet logement de cinq pièces ... Dès lors, Saccard était prêt; il composa son rôle avec un art exquis; il attendit sans sourciller les difficultés et les délicates-ses de la situation qu'il avait acceptée" (96).

The crossing of the threshold is always surrounded with ritual\(^1\)--the symbolic ritual candle-lighting, the ritual funeral arrangements, the meeting of the bride and her family, the seeking of the blessing from his older brother, the negotiations with the family of the new bride, and finally the signing of the marriage contract and the wedding itself highlight the importance of the step that is being taken.

Mme Sidonie, in her role as guardian of the threshold, is perfectly able to take care of all the ritual accompanying the crossing and to direct Saccard in all of his duties--but Saccard realizes that there is one last piece of ceremonial business to be taken care of. Having been graduated, so to speak, from initial protectee status, our hero decides that it is now time for him to be on his own, and not only to ask the blessing of his brother at the time of his marriage, but to bid farewell to his early teacher. As Saccard goes to visit his brother, it is with

\(^1\)Eliade, Naissances mystiques, p. 25 and p.29, discuss why this is true. Read also The Sacred and the Profane by the same author.
mixed emotions of pride and concern. It is not wise for the hero to scorn the help of any protector, for one never knows when it may again be needed; but, having passed that initial stage in his quest, the hero can rightly be proud of his own feats. All in all the meeting with Eugène goes well:

Quand tout fut réglé, Saccard alla cérémonieusement annoncer à son frère Eugène son union avec Mlle Renée Béraud Du Châtel. Ce coup de maître étonna le député. Comme il laissait voir sa surprise:
"Tu m'as dit de chercher, dit l'employé, j'ai cherché et j'ai trouvé."
Eugène, dérouté d'abord, entrevit alors la vérité. Et d'une voix charmante:
"Allons, tu es un homme habile... Compte sur moi... S'il le faut, je mènerai à ta noce tout le côté droit du Corps législatif; ça te poserait joliment..." (101-102)

With the blessing of his early guide and the continuing help of his guardian, he must acknowledge that he is "ravi de l'aventure; la fortune lui était enfin fidèle..." (103).

Throughout the haste and furious activity of this time, burying one wife and immediately acquiring another, the hero has never lost sight of his holy grail, his golden fleece. He has manoeuvred the marriage contract negotiations so that he alone gains much money and property and that his new wife attains quite a bit for herself: strategic buildings and sites for the new avenues he knows are to be cut through Paris.

(The seemingly menial job that his brother Eugene
had obtained for him was a true, albeit figurative, gold mine along the way. Being Agent Voyer in the city of Paris, he has been in the perfect spot to know where all new development will be in the city and he can now arrange to be in the right place at the right time. Saccard has become a kind of Uriah Heep, making it his business to know everything that occurs, and pandying to the bosses. He has been playing an immense and dangerous game, and has been determined to win it. Now, with the guarantee of money and position from his new alliance, he is able to worm his way into everyone's confidence at his leisure. He can make friends in the right places, do favors for the right people, and thereby have them overlook any little misdealings he might have in the future.

In keeping his job and continuing with his original plan, Aristide is preparing the way, clearing the path for an easier quest. Fate will not let him lose his head with this first preliminary stroke of fortune: he is wise enough to keep his wits and not be led astray by his wealthy wife: this new beautiful temptress and her money:

...il avait fait un marché d'or, une dot superbe, une femme belle à le faire décorer en six mois, et pas la moindre charge ... Mais pour le moment, il accordait tous ses soins à une spéculación qui devait être la base de sa fortune... (103)

His original plan was not to be changed, but only facilitated:
Le plan de fortune de l'agent voyer était simple et pratique. Maintenant qu'il avait en main plus d'argent qu'il n'en avait jamais rêvé pour commencer ses opérations, il comptait appliquer ses desseins en grand. ... Ses fonctions lui avaient appris ce qu'on peut voler dans l'achat et la vente des immeubles et des terrains... Il avait tant fureté... qu'il aurait pu prophétiser le spectacle qu'offraient les nouveaux quartiers en 1870... Il était chez lui, il pouvait tricher à son aise. (103-104)

The hero's way is cleared. His new wife's money and his plan will serve him well against those who would stop him. Like a nineteenth-century Theseus, he is entering the labyrinth armed with a vision and a ball of twine.

As the chapter closes, the threshold is crossed, the final rite of the step is completed. The period of trials is to begin.

Having crossed the threshold, the hero has discovered the usefulness of the advice, amulets and secret agents of his helper. He is no longer irritated by destiny but knows "for the first time that there is a benign power everywhere supporting him in his ... passage." ¹

The original departure into the land of trials represented only the beginning of the long and really perilous path of initiatory conquests and moments of illumination. Dragons have now to be slain and surprising barriers passed —

¹Campbell, Hero, p. 97.
again, again, and again. Meanwhile there will be a multitude of preliminary victories, unretainable ecstasies, and momentary glimpses of the wonderful land.¹

The first of the tests that Saccard must undergo are not overly unnerving, and he usually comes out on top in these preliminary trials. The initial test along the road of trials usually, among primitives, entails meeting the father. This one is quasi-literal—he is meeting the father of his bride.² Although the encounter is somewhat frightening in itself—

Saccard, que rien jusque-là n'avait décontenan-
cé, fut glacé par ... la sévérité triste de ce grand vieillard, dont l'oeil perçant lui sembla fouiller sa conscience jusqu'au fond... Il lui tendit la main. Mais Saccard resta frissonnant... (102)

--it is not to stop Saccard. The marriage contract has already been signed, the wedding has taken place, and this small temporary experience is no real setback. By remaining patient and keeping his goal in mind, he shows all his charm, wins over the entire family and thereby passes this obstacle with ease.

Another obstacle is not so easily done away with.

In his dealings at City Hall, Saccard has always taken


² In *Naissances mystiques*, Eliade explains that this is not unusual. There are even primitive tribes whose initiators are the future fathers-in-law of the initiates. See page 26.
great pains to be cautious. His brother's admonition still rings in his ears: "Pas de scandale trop bruyant, ou je te supprime," and he knows his brother capable of carrying out that threat.

But his desire not to be found out is based not only on the fear that he would lose his mentor and helper should his schemes be discovered, but also on the possibility that he would lose his job and thereby lose his only means of attaining the wealth for which he so desperately searches. To avert any danger in this area, Saccard has used his wiles and his powers of observation to buy off (with money, blackmail, or favors) some of the City Commissioners, and has skillfully caught others off their guard. As a result, not only does he easily keep his job, but also, when he becomes a landowner, the Commission always finds in his behalf whenever his money or reputation is at stake.

In order to qualify for some of the Commission's findings, Saccard and his assistant Larsonneau have found it necessary to falsify some records. This leads to one of the most exacting and dangerous of the hero's tests: Larsonneau has kept the altered books, presumably for safety's sake; but in reality, there is no doubt that he has kept them for "insurance", and for blackmail purposes. Although Saccard has paid him off generously (so much so that Larsonneau can open a luxurious office on the rue de Rivoli),
Larsonneau still retains possession of the books. This obstacle is one which our friend Aristide will not overcome with ease, as he has overcome the others. It will take him quite some time to discover a solution; but Aristide loves a challenge. As always, he remains calm and cautious, pretending to ignore Larsonneau, and all the while waiting, cat-like, for an opportunity to pounce upon his prey. The patience he had acquired during the first months of waiting for his brother's help when he first came to Paris pays off again.

In the meantime, Saccard continues the game he started at the time when he acquired his first property: buying, selling and reselling properties in Paris. He does it well: "Aristide Saccard avait enfin trouvé son milieu. Il s'était révélé grand spéculateur, brasseur de millions" (132). Indeed, he does a little too well, becoming braver and more confident. Instead of being content with doing what he knows and continuing along the same lines, our hero branches out. "Aussi mit-il bientôt son génie au service de besognes plus compliquées" (132).

He develops a scheme whereby he can buy and sell for the state and take all the profits for himself. He succeeds in this as well. This victory, however, is still not enough.

Saccard s'affamait, sentait ses désirs s'accroître à voir ce ruissellement d'or qui lui
glissait entre les mains. Il lui semblait qu'une mer de pièces de vingt francs s'élar-
gissait autour de lui, le lac devenait océan, emplissait l'immense horizon avec un bruit de
vagues étrange ... et il s'aventurait, na-
geur plus hardi chaque jour, plongeant, repa-
raissant, tantôt sur le dos, tantôt sur le
ventre, traversant cette immensité par les
temps clairs et par les orages, comptant sur
ses forces et son adresse pour ne jamais aller
au fond. (133)

One of his best coups, however, is the formation
of the Crédit viticole, a group ostensibly lending money
for agriculture. They soon become strong and solid, even
to the point of taking a note from Paris itself.

Le jour où la Ville manqua d'argent, Saccard al-
la tenter. Une somme considérable lui fut a-
vancée, sur une émission de bons de délégation ...
qu'il traîna dans tous les ruisseaux de la spécu-
lation. Le Crédit viticole était désormais inat-
taquable; il tenait Paris à la gorge. (135)

Saccard is not satisfied even with this triumph.¹

He gets involved with a couple of entrepreneurs, Mignon
and Charrier, who, like himself, are busy speculating and
building great fortunes. According to Lukács, the myth
must have other, like, beings "analogues comme frères et
comme voisins."² The hero is not to be alone, for the des-

¹"Bientôt cet agiotage ne lui suffit plus, il dé-
daigna de glaner, de ramasser l'or.... Il mit les bras
dans le sac jusqu'à l'épaule." (135) Please note here and
in the above citations the archetypal images of death and
rebirth in the water and harvest metaphors.

²Georg Lukács, La Théorie du roman (Paris: Gonthi-
er, 1963), pp. 61-62.
tiny of the hero is not only inextricably linked to the
destiny of the community, it is the destiny of the commu-
nity. Mignon and Charrier, and others of Saccard's friends,
are representative of the community as a whole, Saccard's
community. To them he becomes a leader, an animating spi-
rit, helping them make more and more money.

Thus, for quite some time, all seemingly goes well
for Aristide Saccard. But his have been only preliminary
victories along the road of the real quest. These little
victories are not all the hero encounters along the road.
There are many more and graver trials to be faced. For in-
stance, once a company he works with goes bankrupt, but,
thanks to his protector, he comes out of the affair with
clean hands. "Lui s'en tira la conscience nette, les po-
ches pleines, grâce à son frère Eugène, qui voulut bien in-
tervenir" (133).

Even Mignon and Charrier, although they help Sac-
card in establishing bonds in the speculation game, are not
to be the best association he could have desired.

Si Saccard lança l'affaire, l'anima de sa flamme,
de sa rage d'appétits, les sieurs Mignon et Char-
rrier, par leur terre à terre, leur administration
routinière et étroite, l'empêchèrent vingt fois
de culbuter dans les imaginations étonnantes de
leur associé.... Les entrepreneurs, pour couper
court à ces projets qui les effrayaient, déci-
dèrent que les terrains en bordure seraient par-
tagés entre les trois associés, et que chacun
deux en ferait ce qu'il voudrait. Eux conti-
uèrent à vendre sagement leur lots. Lui fit
bâtir. ... Il eût proposé sans rire de mettre Paris sous une immense cloche, pour le changer en serre chaude, et y cultiver les ananas et la canne à sucre. (136)

In this passage we truly see the difference between the heroic and the normal worlds. Where the "prudence usually found to be effective in the [regular] world" prevents Mignon and Charrier from pushing forward, "the hero-soul goes boldly in." ¹

But there are disadvantages to his fever of speculation. His business affairs get so complicated that he scarcely ever sleeps.² He is constantly busy, even to the point of reading his mail in the carriage riding from one deal to the next.

He builds an extravagant house that he cannot afford. He lives beyond his means, constantly in debt. "Il marchait sur un terrain miné, dans une crise continuelle ..." (178). Like the city itself, he slowly goes broke and no one knows it.

La spéculacion traversait alors une heure mauvaise. Saccard était un digne enfant de l'Hôtel de Ville. Il avait eu la rapidité de trans-

¹Campbell, Hero, p. 217.

²This in itself is considered an initiatory test. "Ne pas dormir, ce n'est pas seulement vaincre la fatigue physique, c'est surtout faire preuve de volonté et de force spirituelle: rester éveillé veut dire qu'on est conscient, présent au monde, responsable." Eliade, Naissances mystiques, p. 44.
formation, la fièvre de jouissance, l'aveuglement de dépenses qui secouait Paris. À ce moment, comme la Ville, il se trouvait en face d'un formidable déficit qu'il s'agissait de combler secrètement; car il ne voulait pas entendre parler de sagesse, d'économie, d'existence calme et bourgeoise. Il préférait garder le luxe inutile et la misère réelle.... D'aventure en aventure, il n'avait plus que la façade dorée d'un capital absent. (178-179)

The hero still has a vision, and will continue with his adventures until he has accomplished his journey and received the boon that lies at the end of the quest. But the road is not to be easy for some time to come. Even the best speculations are ruined in his hands. The Crédit viticole nearly goes under; Mignon and Charrier break off their relations with him altogether; and there is still Larsonneau's threat of blackmail hovering like a shadow over his life.

These would seem overpowering problems to any normal person; a hero, however, is barely fazed. By holding on and continuing along the same cheating, thieving lines, finally the Crédit viticole comes out of its problems. "Un ministre très tendre pour cette institution financière, qui tenait la Ville à la gorge, avait inventé un coup de hausse dont M. Toutin-Laroche [Saccard's partner in this venture] s'était merveilleusement servi" (256). Saccard executes a brilliant scheme in marrying his son to a young, sickly girl from an extremely wealthy family; and by a magnificent ruse, he tricks Larsonneau, right in the midst of Larsonneau's
own blackmailing ploy, into giving him the falsified books and letting him burn them page by page. In general, then, things work out well in our hero's business ventures; but these conquests are not final nor do they send him over into the land of miracles to realize his quest.

"The ultimate adventure, when all [other] barriers and ogres have been overcome, is commonly represented as a mystical marriage...of the triumphant hero-soul with the Queen Goddess of the World...."\(^1\) This queen is to be the answer to all his hopes and wishes. "She is the paragon of all paragons of beauty, the reply to all desire, the bliss-bestowing goal of every hero's earthly and unearthly quest."\(^2\) Renée, Saccard's second wife, is the very incarnation of this mythic figure of the Queen Goddess. She fulfills all the hero's desires, furthering his quest to completion. She is breathtakingly beautiful, and even more, Zola describes her actually as queen/goddess of Paris, Saccard's world. She is aware of her status as such.

"...tu habites un hôtel splendide, tu as des chevaux superbes, tes caprices font loi, et les journaux parlent de chacune de tes robes nouvelles comme d'un événement de la dernière gravité; les femmes te jaloussent, les hommes donneraient dix ans de leur vie pour te baiser le bout des doigts ...Est-ce vrai?"
Elle fit, de la tête, un signe affirmatif...(44)
Elle était vraiment divine. (55)

\(^1\)Campbell, Hero, p. 109. \(^2\)Ibid., pp. 109-111.
She could be a real Temptress, the desired but forbidden woman "whose presence is a lure to dangerous desire..." as Mr Campbell describes one of the manifestations of the goddess. If he let himself be drawn along by her beauty, she might cause him to forget the object of his quest. At one time, he nearly succumbs. He is in the course of a business deal with his wife, from which he will profit greatly, and he is almost distracted by desire.

Pendant qu'elle écrivait sur une petite table... il l'examinait avec des yeux où s'allumait un désir étonné. Il faisait très chaud dans la chambre, pleine encore du lever de la jeune femme, des senteurs de sa première toilette. Tout en causant, elle avait laissé glisser les pans du peignoir dans lequel elle s'était pelotonnée, et le regard de son mari, debout devant elle, glissait sur sa tête inclinée, parmi l'or de ses cheveux, très loin, jusqu'aux blancheurs de son cou et de sa poitrine. Il souriait d'un air singulier; ce feu ardent qui lui avait brûlé la face, cette chambre close où l'air alourdi gardait une odeur d'amour, ces cheveux jaunes et cette peau blanche... le tentait avec une sorte de dédain conjugal...

"Vous êtes belle à ravir..." murmura-t-il.

Et comme elle se penchait pour repousser la table, il la baisa rudement sur le cou...
Mais il eut regret de ce baiser de cocher. Il la quitta... (185)

Saccard is not easily swayed. A lesser person, not as dedicated to the quest as our hero is, would doubtless have been overcome by desire. Instead, Saccard turns his young wife's beauty and charm to his advantage. More than once he uses her to further his business ventures.

1Campbell, Hero, p. 111.
He generally thinks of her as one of his properties, and uses her as such.

...il la regardait un peu comme une de ces belles maisons qui lui faisaient honneur et dont il espérait tirer de gros profits. Il la voulait bien mise, bruyante, faisant tourner la tête à tout Paris. Cela le posait, doublait le chiffre probable de sa fortune. Il était beau, jeune, amoureux, érudit, par sa femme. Elle était une associée, une complice sans le savoir. (137)

He uses her beauty and her finery at a ball when he is losing money to keep people from knowing how precarious his position is. "Vers une heure, Saccard disparut. Il avait goûté le succès de sa femme en homme dont le coup de théâtre réussit. Il venait encore de consolider son crédit" (190-191).

He literally uses her to run errands for him, depending on her charm to carry off the scheme, and most of the time it works. "Souvent aussi il se prétendait accablé, l'envoyait chez un ministre, chez un fonctionnaire quelconque, pour solliciter une autorisation ou recevoir une réponse. Il lui disait: 'Et sois sage!' ... Et quand elle revenait, qu'elle avait réussi, il se frottait les mains, en répétant son fameux: 'Et tu a été sage!' "(137).

We cannot forget either that, in marrying Renée he made a great financial deal. He received 200,000 francs outright and much property; and she has even more (and more valuable) property in her name. It is in this domain
that Renée shows herself to be another of the manifestations of the world goddess -- the hampering, forbidding woman--for she has no intention of letting her property go. Our hero must be extremely crafty to get around this impediment to his quest. And he is.

He had been very quick to formulate a plan to rise above this particular problem. As soon as they married, Saccard taught Renée what pleasures luxury can be. He installed her in a beautiful house and gave her whatever she wanted.¹ And although we aren't told other details of his plan, we are told that such a plan exists:

Renée, au bout de quelques mois, avait déjà de gros besoins d'argent... (Saccard) sourit d'un air fin; il entrait dans ses calculs qu'elle jetât l'argent par les fenêtres; ces cinquante mille francs, qui allaient disparaître en dentelles et en bijoux, devaient lui rapporter, à lui, le cent pour cent. (109)

Now he encourages her to spend more and more. Finally, she is so far in debt that she must begin to sell off her property bit by bit. Her husband uses her condition of debt to influence her to sell her property to (whom else?) Saccard's own partner in crime, Larsonneau.

In the true form of the hampering goddess, Saccard's

¹In the novel, we see many allusions to this. On pp. 53-54 we read, "...il la prenait, il la jetait dans cette vie à outrance, où sa pauvre tête se détraquait un peu plus tous les jours" and later, on p. 137, "D'ailleurs, il était parfait: il ouvrait pour elle sa caisse toute grande."
wife, from time to time, refuses to sell a piece of her property. Through an extremely complicated plot, however, Saccard uses her refusals to triumph over Larsonneau and his blackmail trick. It seems that no matter what the goddess does to stop him, Aristide Saccard, the hero, will use her to win out in the end.

The last of Renée's refusals is the most troublesome. The lot on the Charonne is the most valuable piece of property that she owns and the one on which Saccard's entire fortune hinges. He tries many stratagems. First he tries to buy her off ("On ne peut rien vous refuser, murmure-t-il. Je vais courir Paris faire l'impossible... Je veux, chère amie, que vous soyez contente." [215]); then he tries to seduce her and use his conjugal rights to trick her into falling into his hands ("Ce dernier se promit de profiter de sa première demande pour être galant, et renouer des rapports depuis longtemps rompus, dans la joie de quelque grosse dette payée." [213]); then he succeeds (Ce fut le lendemain que Saccard se décida à brusquer le dénouement de l'affaire de Charonne. Sa femme lui appartenait..." [232]); but none of these devices works but temporarily.

Finally he is nearly despaired of getting his wife to sign over the property. He feels that

son refus de signer n'était qu'une vengeance;
elle se moquait bien du reste. Saccard fut sur le point de s'emporter. Tout son rêve croulait. Ses autres affaires allaient de mal en pis. Il se trouvait à bout de ressources, se soutenant par un miracle d'équilibre... Il éprouva, devant le refus de Renée, cette colère blanche d'un homme vigoureux arrêté dans son oeuvre par le caprice d'un enfant. (250)

A hero, however, remains calm in the face of the enemy, and only then does he triumph. Our hero, when he has calmed himself, remembers that he doesn't have to do everything himself—he has "supernatural" helpers and guardians to aid him.

Puis, quand il se fut un peu calmé et qu'il eut l'intelligence nette, il s'étonna du brusque revirement de sa femme: à coup sur, elle avait dû être conseillée. Il flaira un amant. Ce fut un pressentiment si net, qu'il courut chez sa soeur, pour l'interroger, lui demander si elle ne savait rien sur la vie cachée de Renée.... elle s'offrait d'elle-même pour espionner "les tourtereaux". Cette pimbêche verrait comme cela de quel bois elle se chauffait. Saccard, d'habitude, ne cherchait pas les vérités désagréables; son intérêt seul le forçait à ouvrir les yeux qu'il tenait sagement fermés. Il accepta l'offre de sa soeur. (250-251).

The guardian, become one of his best helpers, is now anxious to do whatever she can to aid the hero on his quest; and he is more than willing to take what assistance he can get. Mme Sidonie gets her chance to help the hero when, one evening, the Saccards give a ball. She follows Renée constantly until she sees her and a man disappearing up the stairs to her bedroom. She seizes the opportunity with relish.
Un sourire pâle éclaira son visage de cire, et, retroussant sa jupe de magicienne pour aller plus vite, elle chercha son frère, bouleversant une figure du cotillon, s'adressant aux domestiques qu'elle rencontrait. Elle trouva enfin Saccard avec M. de Mareuil, dans une pièce contiguë à la salle à manger, et que l'on avait transformée provisoirement en fumoir.... Mais quand sa soeur lui eut dit un mot à l'oreille, Saccard se leva, s'excusa, disparut. (282)

Surprising Renée thus, en flagrant délit, Saccard is able to blackmail her into giving him the signed papers he needs to accomplish his last and greatest business deal.

By overcoming the dangers of the Temptress (in all her forms) he has truly come through the trials of the journey successfully. As he needs to be, he has become a true father to his son, made peace with Larsonneau, with Mignon and Charrier, and with the other members of the society he seeks; he has even won the legion of honor. He has completed his most lucrative business deal, has married his son into a wealthy family and no longer even has to support his wife, who soon dies.

He has fulfilled his dream. "La réalisation de cette prédiction lointaine l'enchantait" (299). He has the boon he set out to get, and has returned to society, not as a simple member, but as one of the leaders (even to being on speaking terms with the emperor!), making money nearly as fast as he wants.

"Le fleuve d'or avait enfin ses sources" (301).
CHAPTER TWO

MAXIME AS HERO OF THE MONOMYTH: MAXIME GROWS UP

With Maxime Saccard, the second of our heroes, we have a hero in a different stage: not a fully mature man with a definite quest in mind; on the contrary, Maxime is a mere child when he enters the scene of La Curée. Hence his heroic trip will not be the same as that of Saccard. His is a young man's initiation into society; the object of his quest: to come from the provinces and learn the habits and traditions of a new society so as to be accepted therein as an adult.

By initiation is generally meant the rites and oral instructions which all young persons wanting to enter adult society must undergo, bringing about radical modification in the social status of the initiate. As Eliade says, philosophically speaking, initiation is an ontological mutation of the existential system. This means that at the end of initiation there needs must be a metamorphosis of sorts in which the initiate becomes another. Eliade tells us of what this initiation consists:

Pour avoir le droit d'être admis parmi les adultes, l'adolescent doit affronter une série d'épreuves initiatiques: c'est grâce à ces rites, et aux révélations qu'ils comportent,
qu'il sera reconnu comme un membre responsable de la société. L'initiation introduit le novice à la fois dans la communauté humaine et dans le monde des valeurs spirituelles. Il apprend les comportements, les techniques et les institutions des adultes, mais aussi les mythes et les traditions sacrées de la tribu, les noms des dieux et l'histoire de leurs œuvres...¹

The myths and tradition represent the particular tribe's or society's concept of the world, and it is mainly this world concept to which the novice is introduced during his initiation.

Initiation has always been celebrated in primitive civilizations by rites which imitate the original myth, in which the initiate is separated from society, undergoes tests and trials prescribed by the adults of that particular tribe and then returns to the group, an adult himself. Even in so-called modern civilizations, however, all men undergo various kinds of initiation, for, as Charles Eckert explains:

Initiation is one of the constants of human society, not merely as a social ritual, but also as a symbolic system capable of expressing transition or transcendence from any polar state to its opposite. Just as initiation appears in social ritual wherever rites are employed to effect the transition from boy to man, so initiation as a symbolic system is employed universally to express such transcendental movements as ignorance to knowledge, secularity to sacrality, or life to death or immortality.²

¹Eliade, Naissances mystiques, pp. 10-11.
²Charles W. Eckert, "Initiatory Motifs in the Story of Telemachus," in Myth and Literature, p. 162.
Modern children need initiation just as primitive children do; but it is one of the misfortunes of our time that literal initiations are scarce. Joseph Henderson writes of the modern child's dilemma:

In attempting to free himself from the early family influence, the child becomes the victim of... identity diffusion. This usually becomes manifest when the young individual finds himself exposed to a combination of experiences which demand his simultaneous "commitment to physical intimacy, ... to decisive occupational choice, to energetic competition, and to psychosocial self-definition." ¹

Such a modern child, trying to leave the "womb" of mother and family, is in need of the literal initiations a tribe member faces, or at least some form of psychological initiation, and often gets neither. Maxime would seem to be luckier than most, in that his initiation is a full and complete one.

In both forms of initiation, primitive and physical, or modern and psychological, the process is the same, and since it is an imitation and repetition of the Monomyth, the stages are analogous to those we have seen above: separation, initiation and return.

The first step of stage one, the Call to Adventure, for Maxime is somewhat different than it was for his father. It is here seen as a preliminary manifestation of pow-

ers that will soon come into play. As such it can signal the coming of adolescence. "But whether small or great, and no matter what the stage or grade of life, the call rings up the curtain, always, on a mystery of transfiguration—a rite, or moment, of spiritual passage, which, when complete, amounts to a dying and a birth."¹

Maxime's call comes as a crisis point in his life. He is eleven years of age, at the very verge of adolescence, and is told he must move from the provinces in the south of France, from his school where he has been for many years, and go to a large city he has never seen to live with his father and his father's new wife, whom he has never met. Thus, our hero is separated from the society he has known and forcibly sent to Paris—not that he necessarily would have refused had he had the choice—and we see immediately that he is reborn into a new and mysterious world.

This world into which the hero moves is a place of "strangely fluid and polymorphous beings, unimaginable torments, ... and impossible delight."² This is evidenced in Maxime's story with remarkable clarity. The first encounter he has in this new world is with Renée, his step-mother; she is described as a gust of wind who, he thinks, is disguised.

¹Campbell, Hero, p. 51. ²Ibid., p. 58.
Elle jeta son chapeau et le burnous blanc qu'elle avait mis sur ses épaules pour se protéger contre le froid déjà vif. Elle apparut à Maxime, stupéfait d'admiration, dans tout l'éclat de son merveilleux costume. ... L'enfant la dévorait du regard. Cette dame si blanche ... dont on apercevait la poitrine dans l'entrebaillage d'une chemisette plissée, cette apparition brusque et charmante ... le ravissait, lui semblait la bonne fée de cet appartement tiède et doré. Il se mit à sourire, et il fut tout juste assez gauche pour garder sa grâce de gamin. (121-122)

To Maxime, the child, she seems a delicious apparition and Paris a land of miraculous new experiences; but he is not afraid of them. "Dans cet accoutrement, surpris des choses nouvelles qu'il voyait, il regardait autour de lui, sans timidité, d'ailleurs, de l'air sauvage et rusé d'un enfant précoce, hésitant à se livrer du premier coup" (121).

The Adventure in this new land, full of strange beings, can "begin ... when some passing phenomenon catches the wandering eye and lures [the hero] away from the frequented paths of men."¹ In this case, Renée is that phenomenon which takes him away and makes him decide to go the way of the hero, as opposed to living a "normal" life. But Renée is much more for Maxime than the implement of his Call. She is also seen as Maxime's teacher and protectress in the new land.

In her first exchange with the boy, she tells him that she wants to mold him and teach him the ways of society.

¹Campbell, Hero, p. 58.
"... Je veux être une mère pour vous ... je me disais que je devais me montrer très bonne et vous élever tout à fait bien ... " (122) and, but a few minutes later: "Mais il faudra m'écouter. D'abord, vous laisserez pousser vos cheveux, et vous ne porterez plus cette affreuse tunique. Puis, vous suivrez fidèlement mes leçons de bonnes manières. Je veux que vous soyez un joli jeune homme" (124).

The lessons begin immediately. As they stand face to face, having met for the first time, she tells him what he is and is not to say, how he is to act, dress, and even how his hair should be cut. Over the months and the years to come, she provides him with knowledge, money, clothes, guidance, opportunities, and friends.

As his initiation begins he is already depraved, which is not necessarily considered a bad trait for a man to have in Parisian society at that time; but Renée teaches him how to handle vice and channel it in a direction that will be acceptable to his society.

Mme Saccard is a marvelous teacher.

Renée, qui voulait prendre au sérieux son rôle de mère et d'institutrice, était enchantée de son élève. Elle ne négligeait rien, il est vrai, pour parfaire son éducation. ... elle lui faisait un cours de haute élégance. Elle lui nommait le Tout-Paris impérial, gras, heureux, encore dans l'extase de ce coup de baguette qui changeait les meurt-de-faim et goulots de la veille en grands seigneurs, en milliardaires soufflant et se pâmant sous le poids de leur caisse. Mais l'enfant la questionnait
surtout sur les femmes, et comme elle était très libre avec lui, elle lui donnait des détails précis. ... Elle ... devint le mentor le plus original qu'on pût imaginer. (127)

She teaches him about clothes in a tailor shop, about manners and social graces on rides through the park, at the theater, and in her friends' salons.

At one point, he makes a mistake in his behavior and Renée lets him have the full force of her displeasure.

La belle éducation que recevait Maxime eut un premier résultat. À dix-sept ans, le gamin séduisit la femme de chambre de sa belle-mère. Le pis de l'histoire fut que la chambrière devint enceinte. Il fallut l'envoyer à la campagne avec le marmot et lui constituer une petite rente. Renée resta horriblement vexée de l'aventure ... la jeune femme gronda vertement son élève. Lui, dont elle voulait faire un homme distingué, se compromettre avec une telle fille! Quel début ridicule et honteux, quelle fredaine inavouable! Encore s'il s'était lancé avec une de ces dames! (130-131)

The affair itself and the fact that the woman became pregnant was not disturbing; rather, it was the social status of the persons involved that angered the guide.

This mistake has the effect of teaching Maxime, first hand, of the taboos of his new society, in order that he become a full-fledged, functioning member of it. He learns well, for he does not make that kind of mistake again.

Despite his one transgression, the hero, on the whole, is a very good student. Renée is enchanted with his
progress.

...elle le décrassa de sa province, et il faut
dire qu'il y mit une bonne volonté extrême. Quand
il parut, habillé de neuf des pieds à la tête par
le tailleur de son père, elle poussa un cri de
surprise joyeuse: il était joli comme un coeur.
...(124)

Then, after more lessons: "De telles leçons développaient
singulièrement l'intelligence du collégiens, d'autant plus
que la jeune institutrice les répétait partout, au Bois, au
théâtre, dans les salons. L'élève devint très fort" (128).

He becomes so good, in fact, that he begins to learn
some things that even Renée does not know. "Renée le consul-
tait gravement sur ses toilettes. Il connaissait les bons
faiseurs de Paris, jugeait chacun d'eux d'un mot, parlait
de la saveur des chapeaux d'un tel et de la logique des
robes de tel autre..." (128).

The reader, however, begins to discover that some-
thing is amiss. Although the hero is being taught and is
learning well, he is learning among women only, and so his
education cannot be complete. He does not seem to recog-
nize this fact, and what's more, he does not seem to care.

He loves being with the women.

Ce que Maxime adorait, c'était de vivre dans les
jupes, dans les chiffons, dans la poudre de riz
des femmes... À dix-sept ans, il n'y avait pas
une modiste qu'il n'eût approfondie, pas un bot-
tier dont il n'eût étudié et pénétré le coeur.
(128-129)

And they love him. "Maxime, qu'elles toléraient et qu'elles
aimaient ... était le seul homme admis dans le cénacle" (129).

A mythic reading of this passage is bound to cause uneasiness, for it forebodes future trouble with full initiation into a man's society. Zola himself tells us of this problem with impending manhood. Although often called a man, as we saw in the paragraph above, Maxime is also described repeatedly as being more like a girl.

Le collège de Plassans ... fut ainsi un milieu de souillure, dans lequel se développa singulièrement ce tempérament neutre, cette enfance qui apportait le mal ... la marque de ses abandon d'enfant, cette effémination de tout son être, cette heure où il s'était cru fille, devait rester en lui, le frapper à jamais dans sa virilité.

Renée l'appelait "mademoiselle", sans savoir que, six mois auparavant, elle aurait dit juste. (125)

He is also described as a "poupée"\(^1\), a "joujou", a mechanical little man, and "un homme de carton."\(^2\) So even when Maxime is described as a man, it is in children's terms or as an unreal "man", a toy. Never does Zola hint that there is anything real about his manhood before his initiation is complete.

We get a suggestion that our hero is growing up when he changes roles which his mentor. He has learned what she has to teach and is outgrowing the protectress. This process begins as the stations of the personages become more

\(^1\)See *La Curée*, pp. 124, 126. \(^2\)Ibid., p. 126.
even, no longer as teacher and pupil, but as equals. They are described as "camarades ... étudiants, partageant la même chambre garnie ... Ils s'acceptaient avec des poignées de main, ... se mettant chacun ainsi dans une indépendance absolue. L'idée ... [était] celle d'une sorte de commandite où les bénéfices sont partagés à parts égales..." (143).

Then the levels change again: this time he is on a higher plane than she. "Maintenant Maxime instruisait Renée" (143). She tells him her problems, he consoles her and gives her advice.

When the child outgrows the popular idyl of the mother breast and turns to face the world of specialized adult action, it passes ... into the sphere of the father--who becomes ... the sign of the future task ... Whether he knows it or not, and no matter what his position in society, the father is the initiating priest through whom the young being passes on into the larger world.  

Now Maxime's father takes over as initiator. Together they go through the brothels and other amusement places of Paris, learning and playing together. Then Saccard tries to teach Maxime the things he has learned, namely that marrying money is the way to accomplish great wealth; and the father then sets up such a marriage for Maxime with Louise de Mareuil.

Renée is not ready, however, to see her pupil go. She tries to keep him with her, to protect him. It literally

\[\text{1}^\text{Campbell, }\text{Hero, p. 136.}\]
makes her sick when she thinks his father is taking over.

La façon molle et abandonné dont le père donnait la main au fils disaient seule d'où ils venaient. C'était dans cet air que Renée respirait ses caprices, ses anxiétés sensuelles. Elle les riait nerveusement.
"D'où venez-vous donc? leur disait-elle. Vous sentez la pipe et le musc ... C'est sûr, je vais avoir la migraine." (147)

Maxime has moved over into the world of the phallus, chasing women instead of living among them as their toy. He shows this even in his living habits. "Il ne couchait pas à l'hôtel, pour disposer plus librement de son appartement; d'ailleurs, il ... [logeait] dans les maisons neuves de son père..." (157) Living in the house of his father, leaving that of his mother, is symbolic of Maxime's (perhaps unconscious) efforts to be initiated into the world of adult society.

The severance between his (step)mother and himself is accomplished by a literal three-day separation, when, at this point, Renée secludes herself in her bedroom and returns three days later, reborn, not as the protectress she was before, but as the Queen/Goddess of the world, which she had represented for his father, and whom each hero must meet in order to accomplish his quest for adulthood.

This transformation is deliberate on her part. Renée knows that she has lost Maxime as a student and as a comrade to his father. The only way to get him back is as a
lover.

Et, sous la lumière vive, Renée songeait, en regardant de loin Louise et Maxime. Ce n'était plus la rêverie flottante, la grise tentation du crépuscule, dans les allées fraîches du Bois. Ses pensées n'étaient plus bercées et endormies par le trot de ses chevaux, le long des gazons mondiaux, des taillis où les familles bourgeoisées dînent le dimanche. Maintenant un désir net, aigu, l'emplissait.

Un amour immense, un besoin de volupté, flottait dans cette nef close, où bouillait la sève ardente des tropiques. La jeune femme était prise dans ces noces puissantes de la terre...(75)

The feeling becomes more precisely directed:

Le désir net et cuisant ... était monté au coeur de Renée, dans les parfums troublants de la serre, tandis que Maxime et Louise riaient .... Elle refusa absolument de sortir pendant deux jours... Le troisième jour, il la trouva dans le petit salon, rose, souriante, l'air calme et reposé. (157)

Her scheme to get him back, any way she can, works.

He has always thought Renée beautiful, from his first view of her (as we have already seen, he was "stupéfait d'admiration" [121]), even through his desire for separation, when he distractedly tells her that she is the "queen" of Paris.¹ But now he is more than ever struck by her beauty.

Elle était adorable, vue à cette lueur rapide; si bien que le jeune homme en fut frappé.

"Oh! oh! dit-il, nous paraissions bien jolie, ce soir, belle-maman... Voyons un peu."

...Elle trouva très drôle d'être ainsi regardée et admirée... (160)

¹See pp. 44-45 in La Curée, and above. On page 44 we read, "tu règnes en souveraine."
He recognizes her now as a sexual object. "Diable! il va falloir que je veille sur toi, si je veux te ramener saine et sauve à mon père" (160). She is now truly "la fée excentrique des voluptés mondaines..." (138). Renée is delighted that he finds her so, for it fits in excellently with her plans; she uses his attraction to lure him back into her web. That very evening she consummates her desire to have Maxime and to remain his protector/lover. She seduces her stepson.

In her new form as world goddess instead of guardian/protector, she appears as several different manifestations, several images of the queen/goddess. She is actually his mother, is young enough and intimate enough to be his sister¹, and now is his bride and mistress. And, as the queen/goddess can be malign as well as benevolent, she is delighted to have lured him into committing one of the greatest of all sins. "Elle était radieuse ... [ça] lui donnait ... un délicieux frisson de peur et de caprice contenté .... comme si elle eût goûté un plaisir plus vif..." (163).

She shows herself even more malevolent when she tries to teach him about sin. She tells him, "Le mal, ce devrait être quelque chose d'exquis ... je suis sûre que je

¹ Zola even writes that Maxime tells her this, p.123.
trouve des choses beaucoup plus jolies que ... Blanche Muller" (168).

At one point or another in our hero's journey, Renée has displayed herself as every one of the evil aspects of the queen/goddess\(^1\), whom the hero must encounter along his way.

(1) The absent, unattainable mother, showing aggression toward and receiving aggression from her son: this is Renée at first—so high above her son in sophistication and knowledge that he feels she is unattainable. He dares not, however, show his resentment of this fact in physical aggression; so he does it verbally, often saying things "pour embarrasser sa belle-maman" (128). Her aggression shows when they play their favorite photograph game—each time she makes fun of his choices (145). Her aggression comes out even more effectively than this, however. More than once, she actually frightens him. The most striking time is once when they are together in her greenhouse:

Quand il revint à lui, il vit Renée agenouillée, penchée, avec des yeux fixés, une attitude brute qui lui fit peur. ... Le jeune homme, couché sur le dos, aperçut, au-dessus des épaules de cette adorable bête amoureuse qui le regardait, le sphinx de marbre ... Renée avait la pose et le sourire du monstre à tête de femme, et, dans ses jupons dénoués, elle semblait la

\(^1\) These are listed on page 111 of Campbell's *Hero.*
soeur blanche de ce dieu noir. (199-200)

(2) She has been the hampering, forbidding mother, who made him bend to her will when he would rather be elsewhere doing other things. "La vérité était que le caprice de sa belle-mère venait de l'empêcher de suivre au café Anglais une bande de dames..." (159); and

(3) the "mother who would hold to herself the growing child trying to push away."¹ Renée, as we have seen, becomes physically ill when the son and father are together, and is furious at the idea of Maxime's pending marriage to Louise de Mareuil, one of the steps that have to be taken, according to his initiating priest, Saccard.

She is not really jealous sexually of Louise, but rather she is jealous of anyone or anything that would stand in the way of her total possession of her "son".

Ce fut ainsi que Louise de Mareuil se dressa un jour entre elle et Maxime. Elle n'était pas jalouse de "la bossue", comme elle la nommait dédaigneusement; elle la savait condamnée par les médecins, et ne pouvait croire que Maxime épousât un pareil laideron, même au prix d'un million de dot.... Mais, tout en rejetant la possibilité d'un mariage qui lui eût paru une débauche sinistre et un vol, elle souffrait des familiarités, de la camaraderie des jeunes gens.

... Et il montrait une telle liberté d'esprit qu'elle n'osait lui faire entendre que cette gamine avait dix-sept ans, et que leurs jeux de mains, leur empressement, dans les salons,

¹Campbell, Hero, p. 111.
à chercher les coins d'ombre pour se moquer de tout le monde, la chagrinaient, lui gâtaient les plus belles soirées. (227)

One evening Renée goes so far as to kiss her son at a party given by the Saccards, risking being seen by Louise or anyone else, hoping that this will prevent the marriage.

Un jeudi soir, comme le salon bouton-d'or était plein de monde, il lui poussa la belle idée d'appeler le jeune homme qui causait avec Louise; elle s'avança à sa rencontre, du fond de la serre où elle se trouvait, et le baisa brusquement sur la bouche, entre deux massifs... Mais Louise avait suivi Maxime. Quand les amants levèrent la tête, ils la virent, à quelques pas, qui les regardait avec un étrange sourire. ...

Ce jour-là, Maxime se sentit réellement épouvanté, et ce fut Renée qui se montra indifférente et même joyeuse. C'était fini. Il devenait impossible que la bossue lui prît son amant. Elle pensait:
"J'aurais dû le faire exprès. Elle sait maintenant que 'son petit homme' est à moi." (227)

(4) And now Renée is "the desired but forbidden mother (Oedipus complex) whose presence is a lure to dangerous desire (castration complex) ... "¹

We are reminded of the myth in which Actaeon, upon gazing at Diana's nudity was turned into a stag and killed. Likewise, Maxime has been seduced by a dangerous desire to have his mother, so dangerous that it could not only have him ejected from the society which he is so earnestly endeavoring to enter (symbolic castration), but it could literally have him killed.

¹Campbell, Hero, p. 111.
Renée is the moving force of the love affair. It is she who is the voluntary temptress—it is not merely her willful actions. He is bent to her will because she is the Powerful Temptress.

L'idée de posséder Renée ne lui était jamais nettement venue. Il l'avait effleurée de tout son vice sans la désirer réellement. Il était trop mou pour cet effort. Il accepta Renée parce qu'elle s'imposa à lui, et qu'il glissa jusqu'à sa couche, sans le vouloir, sans le prévoir. Quand il y eût roulé, il y resta, parce qu'il y faisait chaud et qu'il s'oubliait au fond de tous les trougs où il tombait. Dans les commencements, il goûta même des satisfactions d'amour-propre. C'était la première femme mariée qu'il possédait. Il ne songeait pas que le mari était son père. (197)

His (step)mother has been protectress (the womb) and now is the menace (the tomb) for Maxime. "Thus she unites the 'good' and the 'bad', exhibiting the two modes of the ...mother, not as personal only, but as universal."¹

He tries to resist her dangerous side, but cannot. "L'appétit de la jeune femme finissait par le gagner" (169).

But the novice is expected to "contemplate the two with equal equanimity,"² one of the requisites for initiation. "Le mal... C'est une affaire d'éducation..." (168-169). Even this is a part of his instruction in initiation. In order to be initiated then, he must succumb to her (later to triumph over her). Thus, destiny, by making

¹Campbell, Hero, p. 114. ²Ibid.
him supple, by making him weak, also advances him on toward initiation.

The meeting with the queen/goddess is the final initiatory test. His mystical marriage with her leads to his total mastery of life and therefore accomplishment of his goal:

for the woman is life, the hero its knower and master. And the testings of the hero, which were preliminary to his ultimate experience and deed, were symbolical of those crises of realization by which his consciousness came to be amplified and made capable of enduring the full possession of the mother-destroyer, his inevitable bride.¹

In surrendering, by becoming the "husband" of his mother, Maxime should now be the Father. He and the Father should be one. This is a necessary step towards full initiation. But it is not yet accomplished. The hero is not yet master; he is still mastered.

For some time things seem to go well in the love affair of son and mother.

Le jeune homme ne se retira qu'à six heures du matin. Elle lui donna la clef de la petite porte du parc Monceau, en lui faisant jurer de revenir tous les soirs ... En sortant au petit jour, par un brouillard épais, Maxime était un peu étourdi de sa bonne fortune... (195)
...Ils ... goutèrent, pendant les premiers mois, les joies les plus raffinées, les plus délicatement cherchées. (190)

¹Campbell, Hero, pp. 120-121.
They are relatively happy in their sin—Renée especially so. "Cet hiver fut pour Renée une longue joie. Elle ne souffrait que du besoin d'argent. Maxime lui coûtait très cher... Mais cette misère cachée était pour elle une volupté de plus" (208). She is not ashamed of her crime, but rather enjoys it with fervor.

...Renée ne s'était pas cloîtrée. Elle courait le monde, y menait Maxime à sa suite, comme un page blond en habit noir, y goûтait même des plaisirs plus vifs. La saison fut pour elle un long triomphe. ... Elle rajeunissait, elle était dans la plénitude de sa beauté turbulente. L'inceste mettait en elle une flamme qui luisait au fond de ses yeux et chauffait ses rires. (210)

She now possesses him totally. She can go back to protecting him: "Elle s'ingéniait, se cassait la tête pour que 'son cher enfant' ne manquât de rien " (208). And when there is a real problem with money, she fears first for him. "Et pourtant c'était de Maxime qu'il s'agissait, de sa liberté!" (218).

She wants to take care of him, to be his mother and protectress, but most of all she wants to hold him to her: to possess him. Until he breaks this hold, he will not be initiated—he will not be a man. Now she is the man.

Renée était l'homme, la volonté passionnée et agissante. Maxime subissait. Cet être neutre ... devenait, aux bras curieux de la jeune femme, une grande fille... Renée jouissait de ses dominations, elle pliait sous sa passion cette créature où le sexe hésitait toujours. (200) Elle guettait Maxime, cette proie renversée sous elle, qui s'abandonnait, qu'elle possédait
tout entière. (203)

In his fascinating monograph, Symbolic Wounds, Bruno Bettelheim puts forth the theory that the rites of initiation represent the fear of castration in all men. In the chapter entitled "Clinical Observations," he writes of a young boy in whom we can see our hero. This child, on the verge of adolescence, saw himself as irresistible to, and persecuted by, women, "who were jealous of his sex, his looks, his abilities, etc." He provoked the girls, and when they chased him, he experienced these episodes as "another in a long series of efforts by women to castrate him."¹

Renée's attraction for Maxime, and her friends' affection for him, have made him think that he, too, is irresistible to women. And yet Renée's refusal to let Maxime be a man is tantamount to a symbolic castration—and this fact frightens him:

Mais il était un lieu dont Maxime avait presque peur, et où Renée ne l'entraînait que les jours mauvais ... dans la serre...²(199) Ét c'était surtout dans la serre que Renée était l'homme. (201)

At the same time, however he is attracted by the castrating

¹Bruno Bettelheim, Symbolic Wounds, p. 29.

²Charles Eckert in his "Initiatory Motifs" says that during the time of symbolic castration "initiates usually endure periods of seclusion in a dark and threatening place and live in imminent fear of being destroyed...", p. 164. The dark place is often womb-like, as is the greenhouse, p. 165.
woman, "Dans les commencements, il goûta même des satisfactions d'amour-propre. C'était la première femme mariée qu'il possédait" (197).

As an extension of this castration anxiety, Mr. Bettleheim reveals that:

Some features of male initiation rites apparently are designed to make men as much as possible like women.... They thus seem to satisfy, at least temporarily, those tendencies that are in opposition to the sexual role the person is supposed to assume once and for all when the ceremonies end.

There are many ways in which a man can deal with a socially unacceptable desire. One way is to dramatize it ... and, through intense but in the long run only token satisfaction, try to rid himself of it permanently.¹

We are told that Maxime will eventually rid himself of his feminine identification problems—"ce tempérament neutre, cette enfance qui apportait le mal, d'on ne savait quel inconnu héréditaire [:] L'âge allait heureusement le corriger" (125); but first he must act out his femininity for a while longer: "cette efféminiation de tout son être, cette heure où il s'était cru fille, devait rester en lui le frapper ... dans sa virilité" (125).

This, too, is dramatized in one of Mr Bettleheim's case studies in which a young boy considered himself a woman. He had a strong feminine identification, and yet he hated and feared women greatly. "He was provocatively passive and

¹Bettleheim, Symbolic Wounds, p. 107.
constantly invited others ... to chase him and 'rape him'. Day after day, he acted out his two favorite roles, Joan of Arc and Juliet, each of which requires the woman to die.¹ This boy, like Maxime, is penetrated with feminine attributes, and is trying his best to get rid of them. Maxime, in the end, through successful initiation, and the death of Renée, succeeds in ridding himself of this spectre of the Woman.

When the time comes for the culmination of his initiation, we cease to read any allusions to the femininity of the hero. At that time, he will have become more than man; he will have assimilated his feminine aspects and become an adult, functioning fully in society: he will be the returned hero.

At some time during the process of initiation, life becomes repugnant to the hero. Campbell explains:

But when it suddenly dawns on us, or is forced to our attention, that everything we think or do is necessarily tainted with the odor of the flesh, then, not uncommonly, there is experienced a moment of revulsion: life, the acts of life, the organs of life, woman in particular as the great symbol of life, become intolerable.²

Maxime has such a moment. In the midst of his affair and its "joys" there comes a time when he becomes disgusted with the flesh and with women. The world becomes boring and pain-

¹Bettleheim, Symbolic Wounds, pp.28-29.

²Campbell, Hero, p. 122.
ful for him. "Maxime, lui, trouvait le monde assommant. ... il ne s'amusait réellement nulle part" (210).

He is surrounded by women, and feels stifled by them; especially by Renée, in whose company he constantly remains. She suffocates him.

Le jeune homme perdu de nouveau dans les jupons, 'dont il avait jusqu'aux yeux', souffrait de ces ténèbres, de ce silence, de cette femme ... (174) Il disparaissait dans les jupons de Renée. (210) Maxime ... rêvait ... avec quelque ennui. Il étaït fâché de l'aventure. Il s'en prenait au domino de satin noir. Avait-on jamais vu une femme se fagoter de la sorte! ... il ne l'aurait pas touchée du bout des doigts ... Il se serait souvenu qu'elle était la femme de son père ...
(175)

The feeling of revulsion grows, as does his fear:

C'était bien désagréable. Maintenant, elle lui faisait peur. Elle le couvait avec des yeux inquiétants, elle le possédait si despotiquement, qu'il croyait sentir des griffes s'enfoncer dans son épaule, quand elle posait là sa main blanche. Sa turbulente devenait de la brusquerie, et il y avait des sons brisés au fond de ses rires. (229)

Then even the love turns sour; all their adventures are disillusioning; and in most places "Leur amour lui-même s'y ennuya" (213). Maxime does not want the flesh of the woman any more. One evening, as he undresses her, he stops "pour tourner la tête, pour ne pas voir les seins nus de Renée. C'était instinctif..." (245).

She becomes the hampering, forbidding Mother to such an extent that he decides he must rid himself of her. He
seems to realize that, in standing in the way of his marriage to Louise de Mareuil, she is standing in the way of his rejoining society and his father as symbol of it.

Quand Maxime fut tâté à ce sujet, il éprouva un embarras. Louise l'amusait, la dot le tentait plus encore. Il dit oui, il accepta toutes les dates que Saccard voulut ... Mais, au fond, il s'avouait que, malheureusement, les choses ne s'arrangeraient pas avec une si belle facilité. Renée ne voudrait jamais; elle pleurerait, elle lui ferait des scènes, elle était capable de commettre quelque gros scandale pour étonner Paris... Maxime attendait passivement une occasion qui le débarrassât de cette maîtresse gênante. (228-229)

He seizes the first opportunity that comes his way to do just that. It occurs a few nights later when he tries to see her in her room, and she refuses him entry; there is another man therein. Of course that man is Saccard (the mother, as is inevitable, goes back to the father, thereby allowing the child to grow up--the fact that here she does it against her will makes no difference). The child, in one last effort to grow up, and the hero, in one last effort to leave the temptress, tells her with mixed emotions that he must leave.

Maxime éprouvait plus d'irritation qu'il n'aurait cru; mais il demeurait encore assez désintéressé pour réfléchir, pour se dire que l'occasion était bonne, et qu'il allait rompre....

"Tu aurais dû me le dire, je ne serais pas venu vous déranger ... Ça se voit tous les jours, qu'on ne s'aime plus. Moi-même, je commençais à en avoir assez ... Je vais te laisser...."

(231)

In reality Maxime is extremely relieved to be rid
of his evil, hampering mother. The woman, the goddess of sin, has become the symbol of degradation and defeat for him. Like Oedipus and Hamlet, "he turns from the fair features of the world to search ... for a higher kindom than this of the incest and adultery ridden, luxurious and incorrigible mother." Maxime as hero "must press beyond her, surpass the temptations of her call ..."\(^1\)

Now he can leave her behind and go with the men, be taught by them and learn what he must know to become a full-fledged adult member of society. There are, he thinks, no more tests and trials; he has nearly arrived. "Maxime trouva tout cela très bien. Il était débarrassé de Renée, il ne voyait plus d'obstacle, il se livrait à son père comme il s'était livré à sa belle-mère" (243).

The father is always the initiating priest for a boy; it is through him that the boy passes to the higher plane and becomes man.\(^2\) Saccard, when he needs to accept

\(^1\)Campbell, \textit{Hero}, p. 122.

\(^2\)On page 173 of Erich Neumann's, \textit{The Origins and History of Consciousness}, translated by R. F. C. Hull (New York: Bollingen Foundation, Inc., 1962), we read:

"'The fathers' are the representatives of law and order, from the earliest taboos to the most modern juridical systems; they hand down the highest values of civilization, whereas the mothers control the highest, i.e., deepest, values of life and nature. The world of the fathers is thus the world of collective values; it is historical and related to the fluctuating level of conscious and cultural de-
this role, shows himself ultimately capable of being a good
initiating priest. He waxes eloquent in his teachings.

Il partit de là pour déclarer que l'amour de
ces filles était vraiment mauvais. Il se mon-
trait moral, il trouvait des sentences, des con-
seils étonnants de sagesse.

"Vois-tu, dit-il à son fils, ça n'a qu'un
temps, mon petit ... On y perd sa santé, et l'on
n'y goûte pas le vrai bonheur. Tu sais que je
ne suis pas un bourgeois. Eh bien, j'en ai as-
sez, je me range."

Maxime ricanait; il arrêta son père, le con-
templa au clair de lune, en déclarant qu'il a-
vait "une bonne tête". Mais Saccard se fit plus
grave encore.

"Plaisante tant que tu voudras. Je te ré-
pète qu'il n'y a rien de tel que le mariage pour
conserver un homme et le rendre heureux."

Alors il lui parla de Louise. Et il marcha
plus doucement, pour terminer cette affaire, di-
sait-il, puisqu'ils en causaient. La chose était
complètement arrangée....

...Puis, comme ils arrivaient vers le haut du
boulevard Malesherbes, il lui donna de nouveau
une foule d'excellents conseils. Il lui appren-
nait comment il devait s'y prendre pour faire
un paradis de son ménage.

"Surtout, ne romps jamais avec ta femme. C'est
une bêtise. Une femme avec laquelle on n'a plus
de rapports vous coûte les yeux de la tête ... D'abord, il faut payer quelle fille, n'est-ce
pas? Puis, la dépense est bien plus grande à la
maison: c'est la toilette, c'est les plaisirs
particuliers de Madame, les bonnes amies, tout
le diable et son train."

Il était dans une heure de vertu extraor-
dinaire. Le succès de son affaire de Charonne
lui mettait au coeur des tendresses d'idylle.

"...Tu vas être riche, fais-tois avec Louise
un intérieur où vous vivrez comme deux tourte-
deaux. C'est si bon! J'irai vous voir. Ça me

velopment within the group. The prevailing system of
cultural values, i.e., the canon of values which
gives a culture its peculiar physiognomy and its
stability, has its roots in the fathers."
fera du bien."
Il finissait par avoir les larmes dans la
voix. (242-244)

Although a good teacher, even Saccard cannot easily
wrench the boy away from the mother to go on to what he and
his society consider manly pursuits. The temptress is more
powerful against the hero than they suspect. Her hypnotic
pull brings him back to her, even after his father has taken
over his education. "Quand Maxime fut enfin débarrassé de
son père, il fit rapidement le tour du parc. ... il éprou-
vait l'irrésistible besoin de voir Renée" (244). But he
does not want to take her back as a mistress. He would ra-
ther keep her as protectress. He wants to keep one of her
facets, but not the others. It is often said that feelings
for mother are closely linked to longing for material things;¹
and it is this feeling which Maxime has for his stepmother.²
She has paid his bills, rescued him when he has had problems
and paid off his creditors when they became worrisome. It is
this Renée which Maxime (and all boys) would like to keep.
It is not however what Renée wants; and, for the moment at
least, what Renée wants Renée gets.

¹J. E. Cirlot, A Dictionary of Symbols (New York: Philosophical Library, 1972), p. 207, discusses this prin-
ciple more in detail. It seems to have always been so: the
word materia, of course, means "what belongs to mother".

²"Mais il se sentait incapable d'un éclat... elle é-
tait maternelle, elle payait pour lui, elle le tirerait d'em-
barras, si quelque créancier se fâchait," p. 229, La Curée.
She forces Maxime to come back to her. When he does so she commits the heinous and unforgivable crime: she tricks him into telling her his father's secrets, a mistake that will eventually lead to her death.

All this she has done in the name of love. And in the name of love she has lured him back into the old trap—the one in which he does not want to stay, but from which he cannot escape.

Maxime hésitait, désespéré. Il voyait la sottise qu'il avait commise, il se reprochait d'avoir trop causé. Comment annoncer son mariage, maintenant! C'était sa faute, la rupture était faite, il n'avait pas besoin de remonter dans cette chambre, ni surtout d'aller prouver à la jeune femme que son mari la dupait. Et il ne savait plus à quel sentiment il venait d'obéir, ce qui redoublait sa colère contre lui-même. Mais, s'il eut la pensée un instant d'entre brutal une seconde fois, de s'en aller, la vue de Renée qui laissait tomber ses pantoufles lui donna une lâcheté invincible. Il eut peur. Il resta. (250)

When man is dominated so totally by the feminine principle, it is a huge task for him to break away. "To come triumphantly through this stage and to reinstate the masculine principle as the guiding-rule of life ... would signify an achievement of the kind that was once symbolized by the ... transmutation of mercury into sulphur."  

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1This mistake has often been fatal. See supra, p. 28, note 2.

2Cirlot, op. cit., p. 208.
The Guardian/Protectress will exert herself one last time to make sure this step is not so easily taken.

If the hero has attained the boon by which he can re-enter society, and if his desire to do so goes against the guardian/protector's will, then the last stage of the journey becomes a spirited chase: the hero trying to get away, the guardian in close pursuit.¹ Now, Maxime, in reaching for the boon his father has promised—full initiation and acceptance, symbolized by his marriage with the wealthy sickly Louise—and in desiring to leave Renée to re-attain society, most certainly goes against his protectress's will. So Renée gives chase. Maxime tries again and again to leave her, but she continues to intimidate him. If she were to expose him, he would be finished in society, symbolically castrated and killed. Powerless to leave her, he remains.

The overprotective mother is not content with this spiritless, necessarily temporary possession, for she knows that Saccard will one day (and soon) take Maxime and marry him off to whomever he pleases. So she devises a scheme whereby Saccard cannot get to him. Her scheme entails threatening to lock up her son and to move to America with him.

¹For a more detailed discussion and many examples of this, read "The Magic Flight" in Campbell, Hero, pp. 196-207.
"Quand on a fait ce que nous avons fait, on reste ensemble. D'ailleurs, c'est bien clair, je m'ennuie lorsque tu n'es pas là, et comme je m'en vais, je t'emmène..."

Le malheureux tendit les mains, supplia: "Voyons, ma petite Renée, ne fais pas de bêtise. Reviens à toi... pense un peu au scandale.

--Je m'en moque du scandale! Si tu refuse, je descends dans le salon et je crie que j'ai couché avec toi et que tu es assez lâche pour vouloir maintenant épouser la bossue."

Il plia la tête, l'écouta, cédant déjà, acceptant cette volonté qui s'imposait si rudement à lui.

...la terreur reprenait Maxime... c'était comme un cauchemar atroce qui l'étouffait. Il cherchait avec désespoir un moyen pour sortir de ce cabinet de toilette, de ce réduit rose où battait le glas de Charenton...

"...Maintenant, mon petit Maxime, je vais t'enfermer..." (283-284)

Renée accuses Saccard of wanting to take her son away, and rightly so--the boy must go with the father. Now she will defy even him to keep Maxime. Scandal means nothing to her; the only thing that matters is keeping her son/lover.

It is not unusual for a hero, for whatever reason, to refuse to return to the father and to society. He may, like the Buddha, enjoy the land of miracles and decide to stay, refusing to go back into the chaotic world; or, like Maxime, he may be forced to remain by some outside force. But whatever the cause of his refusal to return, the hero is not to be allowed to stay: the forces of destiny will come to his aid. "The hero may have to be brought back
from his ... adventure by assistance from without. That is
to say, the world may have to come and get him.\(^1\)

Even the power of the temptress is not equal to the
power of destiny. The world, represented here by the father,
returns to take the hero back into it. But it cannot be
done without help. The powers of destiny, as we have seen
many times before, have earthly agents ready to help the he-
ro whenever he may need it. Mme Sidonie, whom we have al-
ready seen as this agent, helps Maxime as she did his father.
She tells the father where he can find the son in order to
bring him back into society.

Elle trouva enfin Saccard avec M. de Mareuil,
dans une pièce contigüe à la salle à manger
... Les deux pères parlaient de dot, de con-
trat. Mais quand sa soeur lui eût dit un
mot à l'oreille, Saccard se leva, s'excusa,
disparut. (282)

Saccard, with the help of the "magicienne", finds
the hero and forcibly sets the boy free--free to become a
man. The men go off together, arm in arm,\(^2\) signifying that
Maxime is now in the realm of the father -- ready to finish
his requirements for membership in society.

\(^1\)Campbell, Hero, p. 207.

\(^2\)In this act, the father and the son torture and
symbolically kill the mother. Charles Eckert in "Initia-
tory Motifs in the Story of Telemachus," tells us that a
mock or real terrorizing of the mother is required for full
initiation. p. 164.
The final rite which must be accomplished before the adventure ends is the marriage of Maxime and Louise. When this takes place the hero has the promised boon, the riches for which he has searched and which he wants to spend, as well as the status of a married, well-established man of society.

After the marriage, however, there occurs one last problem, almost as an afterthought to the adventure; but it serves to bring the adventure together and to reinforce the hero's position as member of society. This is one more step which most heroes must take and this occurrence proves that Maxime is no different from those other heroes.

This problem befalls our hero when Renée decides to avenge herself. In order to do this, like Phaedra, and like Joseph's employer's wife in the Bible, she tells her husband what Maxime has done, blaming him for their actions.

Elle se vengeait, elle jetait à la face de ces deux hommes l'infamie qu'ils avaient mise en elle; elle se disait que, maintenant, elle ne les verrait plus se moquer d'elle, au bras l'un de l'autre, comme des camarades. (303)

But the rift which this causes between father and son is very short-lived. He is soon atoned with the father, thereby completing the adventure.

According to Joseph Campbell1 (and the theory of in-

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1Campbell, Hero, pp. 126-149, the chapter entitled "Atonement with the Father."
dividuation of Carl Jung), this atonement with the father is essential both on the psychological level and on the mythological level. It is necessary for the myth to be completed for the hero to truly become a functioning member of male society. As Campbell shows us so well, in order for personal individuation to be completed the frightening aspect of the father must be assimilated.

...the ogre aspect of the father is a reflex of the victim's own ego... the potentially adult spirit [is sealed] off from a better balanced, more realistic view of the father, and there-with of the world. Atonement (at-one-ment) consists in no more than the abandonment of that self-generated double monster.... But this requires an abandonment of the attachment to ego itself, and that is what is difficult.... It is in this ordeal that the hero may derive hope and assurance from the helpful female figure... only to find, in the end, that the father and mother reflect each other, and are in essence the same...

The problem of the hero going to meet the father is to open his soul beyond terror to such a degree that he will be ripe to understand... the majesty of Being. The hero transcends life with its peculiar blind spot... He beholds the face of the father, understands--and the two are atoned. ¹

Atonement is not all, however, that comes from the adventure. The obstacles and trials have been passed along the way, Maxime has married the woman his father required him to marry and, after a short trip abroad, he has returned

¹Joseph Campbell, The Hero, pp. 129 - 130, p. 131, p. 147.
alone to take his place in the society. What we must realize here is that in Maxime the world is renewing itself. This is the true meaning of the adventure. In him there is unmistakably the reflection of the father: he has married for money, has been widowed young, his father has come to him to borrow money, and he has been "married" to his father's wife. The son has had the mother and therefore at this point he finally is the father. He and the father are one, yet distinct. Life is not repeating itself, it is merely being renewed.

Now that the tests have been passed, the adventure is at its close, we see the two together on the same plane. Both are men.

Saccard et Maxime marchaient à petits pas, au bras l'un de l'autre. Le père avait dû rendre visite au fils, et tous deux étaient descendus de l'avenue de l'Impératrice jusqu'au lac, en causant.
"Tu m'entends, répétait Saccard, tu es un niaud... Quand on a de l'argent comme toi, on ne le laisse pas dormir au fond de ses tiroirs. Il y a cent pour cent à gagner dans l'affaire dont je te parle. C'est un placement sûr. Tu sais bien que je ne voudrais pas te mettre dedans!"
Mais le jeune homme semblait ennuyé de cette insistance. Il souriait de son air joli, il regardait les voitures...
Ils regardèrent la femme en violet. Puis Saccard tira un cigare de sa poche, et s'adressant à Maxime qui fumait:
"Donne-moi du feu." (309-310)
CHAPTER THREE

RENEE AS HERO OF THE MONOMYTH: LE MAL DE RENEE

Renée is a different kind of "hero" from our first two--not just because she is a woman but because from the very beginning of her story she does not know what she wants. In this she differs even from Maxime, who does know that he needs to be initiated. Renée knows that there is some thing for which she needs to search, but does not know what that thing is. Her searched-for objective is some unnamed "other thing"\(^1\) for which she has longed most of her life.

Her earliest feelings on the subject are that carnal love might be that other thing for which she seeks. As a very young girl, while living in the convent school which she attended from a very tender age, Renée showed her first leanings in this direction.

Chez les dames de la Visitation, libre, l'esprit

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\(^1\)We read in many places in La Curée of Renée's desire for something else. Perhaps the most succinct description of her feelings is given in the following passage:

"Puis, comme une espérance se levait en elle, avec des frissons de désir, l'idée de cet 'autre chose' que son esprit tendu ne pouvait trouver. Là, sa rêverie s'égarait. Elle faisait effort, mais toujours le mot cherché se dérobait dans la nuit tombante..."(48)
vagabondant dans les voluptés mystiques de la chapelle et dans les amitiés charnelles de ses petites amies, ... elle embarrassa singulièrement son confesseur, en lui avouant qu'un jour, pendant la messe, elle avait eu une envie irraisonnée de se lever pour l'embrasser. (138)

At her father's home during those years, her feelings of misdirected desire continue:

Parfois, Renée, lasse de cet horizon sans bornes, grande déjà et rapportant du pensionnat des curiosités charnelles, jetait un regard dans l'école de natation des bains Petit ... Elle cherchait à voir ... les hommes en caleçon dont on apercevait les ventres nus. (119)

But these feelings are still only vague desires. "Elle était plus ... une curiosité qu'un appétit" (138). There has been in her life no real Call, nothing to let her know what it was that she wanted. According to Joseph Campbell, this can be a truly desperate plight for a hero; and Renée does feel desperate and unloved for most of her life. At the age of eight she was "forgotten at the convent", and she knows it. Eventually, however, there is a glimmer of hope for Renée's future in the form of a Call to Adventure.

The Call, for a hero, can arrive in many forms, one of which is a mere blunder, as in the story of the princess and the frog in which the frog comes as a herald for the future adventure. This herald might appear in the form of a beast, dark, terrifying and repugnant, "representative of the repressed instinctual fecundity within ourselves," or the figure can be veiled and mysterious, representing the
Both of these manifestations of the herald are applicable to Renée's story. Her call to adventure begins with a rather serious blunder which is committed the very summer she is released from convent school. She is in the country visiting a friend when she is raped by an older, married man. This rape (and her ensuing pregnancy) is the announcement of her adventure, which is to begin with her marriage to Aristide Saccard.

Although a rape would be judged unspeakably horrible and evil by the world, Renée does not find it so. She had not known what physical love would be like, and had even been rather curious about it when the incident occurred, thinking that perhaps this finally was that something for which she felt compelled to search. "La faute qui amena plus tard son mariage avec Saccard, ce viol brutal ...

[Renée le] subit avec une sorte d'attente épouvantée..." (138).

When the deed is done, she is unhappy, not about the experience itself, but that she feels no more emotionally about it than she does. Her desire for carnal knowledge has been shown by this episode not to be the object of her quest, and so her main feeling is of disappointment rather than sorrow.

1Campbell, Hero, p. 53.
In that the incident brings about tremendous change in her life, while showing her in which direction not to go on her journey through adventure, the act is also representative of the darkness of the unknown. But the reader need not fear for her. Contrary to the apparent blackness and horror of the situation, the results of the assault on Renée are analogous to those of the story of the frog king. Like this beast, the initially frightening herald brings up the golden sun ball in his mouth; and so, from the pain and anxiety of separation from the virginal, childish state, there come the "golden" prospects of life's adventure with Aristide Saccard.

The adventure begins as a mistake, a sort of forcible crossing of the threshold. We are given to believe that Renée could not now refuse to cross if she wished to do so. She is pregnant, evidently against her conscious will, and there is no choice but to marry Saccard and venture precipitously into the unknown, with no previous preparation on her part for the adventure upon which she is embarking.

Renée's aunt Elisabeth might be, in some ways, considered a protectress, although a half-hearted one.

... elle s'accusa, comme si elle s'était sentie complice; ses préférences pour Christine la désolaient, et elle pensait que, si elle avait également gardé Renée près d'elle la pauvre enfant n'aurait pas succombé. Dès lors, pour chasser ce
remords cuisant, dont sa nature tendre exagérait encore la souffrance, elle soutint la coupable; elle amortit la colère du père... elle inventa... cet étrange projet de mariage, qui lui semblait tout arranger, apaiser le père, faire rentrer Renée dans le monde des femmes honnêtes, et dont elle voulait ne pas voir le côté honteux ni les conséquences fatales. (97-98)

And, though she is wealthy and provides what one might consider some quite effective amulets against the problems of the future: 200,000 francs, plus much property to which she makes sure Renée alone will have access—"Vous comprendrez mon intention, je ne veux pas que cet enfant puisse un jour être à votre charge. Dans le cas où il mourrait, Renée resterait seule propriétaire" (100)—she is not all-powerful and soon washes her hands of the whole affair, relieved to have it off her conscience.

Nevertheless, even without significant personal help, it is still possible that a seeker or hero be saved by virtue of such "inherited symbolic aids ...". Renée's plight is still far from hopeless.

The first threshold is crossed as Renée marries Aristide Saccard (the crossing being aided by Aunt Elisabeth and Sidonie Rougon Touche, whom Renée has never met). The crossing is not fearsome for Renée; on the contrary, the prospect of crossing into the land of miracles is exciting for her.

1Campbell, Hero, p. 23.
Renée, depuis qu'on négociait son mariage, avait retrouvé son allure d'écervelé, sa tête folle. 
...Elle trouva Saccard petit, laid, mais d'une laideur tourmentée et intelligente qui le lui dé- 
plut pas; il fut, d'ailleurs, parfait de ton et de manières. (102)

There is one grave problem with Renée's crossing however. She is forced across the threshold with no real initiation. The herald "announces" an adventure and immediately she is precipitated into the middle of that adventure, directly into a new society of which she knows nothing, with no previous instruction in living there. Even the marriage ceremony is considered such an insignificant rite of passage that it is not described in the book. Joseph Campbell explains the consequences of such a gap in the crossing:

...the traditional rites of passage [are] used to teach the individual to die to the past and be reborn to the future ... Such was the ideal, whether the [person] was a craftsman, or a king. By the sacrilege of the refusal of the rite, however, the individual cut himself as a unit off from the larger unit of the whole community...

So Renée is cut off from the rest of the community. She cannot fit in with them; although she has friends and admirers within the society, she is never one of them. She is apart from the rest, either on a pedestal or on a different level from the others.

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1Campbell, Hero, p. 15.
At this point in her life, Renée seems to believe that the money and riches to be had in this new, unsheltered life of which she knows nothing (but in the midst of which she suddenly finds herself) can provide for her that other thing for which she is searching. For awhile, it seems as if she might be right.

...Renée, installée luxueusement dans l'appartement de la rue de Rivoli, au milieu de ce Paris nouveau dont elle allait être une des reines, méditait ses futures toilettes et s'essayait à savie de grande mondanité ...

(108)

She is ostensibly very happy with her husband and in her new life of luxury.

Avec un tel mari, Renée était aussi peu mariée que possible. Elle restait des semaines entières sans presque le voir. D'ailleurs, il était parfait: il ouvrait pour elle sa caisse toute grande. Au fond, elle l'aimait comme un banquier obligeant. (137)

But, without any help, with no instruction as to how to behave or how to go about living this kind of life, this wealth and luxury turn out to be another cruel disappointment in Renée's life. First she lives her life wrong-ly, throwing her money away:

Renée, au bout de quelques mois, avait déjà de gros besoins d'argent. Le mari n'intervint que pour autoriser sa femme à vendre. Quand le marché fut conclu, elle le pria de placer en son nom cent mille francs qu'elle lui remit en toute confiance ...

(109);

then she realizes that this outrageous life is not that thing for which she is searching: "...elle voyait sa vie
passée, le contentement immédiate de ses appétits, l'écoeur-
ment du luxe, la monotonie écrasante des mêmes tendresses
et des mêmes trahisons" (48). She finally relapses into
searching for that "other thing" which she so desperately
needs.

Renée [se] sentait plus inquiète, plus nerveuse;
se jupes de soie glissaient avec des sifflements
de couleuvre sur les épais tapis, le long du sa-
tin des causeuses; elle était irritée par ces
dorures imbéciles qui l'entouraient ... et elle
eût voulu, pour remplir ce luxe, pour habiter ce
rayonnement, un amusement suprême que ses curio-
sités cherchaient en vain dans tous les coins de
l'hôtel, dans le petit salon couleur de soleil,
dans la serre aux végétations grasses. (154)

She seems to have known, almost from the begin ning,
that it was her precipitous crossing into the new land with-
out initiation that has been causing her to feel this way
and, indeed, which separates and alienates her from the
rest of society and eventually from herself.

Puis elle songea au coup de baguette de son mar-
riage, à ce veuf qui s'était vendu pour l'épou-
ser, et qui avait troqué son nom de Rougon con-
tre ce nom de Saccard, dont les deux syllabes
sèches avaient sonné à ses oreilles, les pre-
mières fois, avec la brutalité de deux rateaux
ramassant de l'or; il la prenait, il la jetait
dans cette vie à outrance, où sa pauvre tête se
détraquait un peu plus tous les jours. (53-54)

Still, though she feels that life and her unknown quest are
slipping away from her, Renée's situation is not yet with-
out hope. There is still a protector and guardian, an a-
gent of destiny who remains to be encountered. As Hender-
son has written (and Jung agrees), "the early weakness of
the hero is balanced by the appearance of strong 'tutelary'
figures—or guardians—who enable him to perform the super-
human tasks that he cannot accomplish unaided."¹ The hero
who is aided by this figure is nearly invincible, since that
character is representative of powers beyond man's control.

This guardian is the figure who lures "the innocent
soul into realms of trial;"² but she is also the provider
of help. She can be the initiatory priest who helps the
hero struggle through these perils on to a higher plane via
the accomplishment of the quest. Thus, the guardian is am-
biguous—dangerous and beneficial at the same time.

Mme Sidonie has already been seen as the guardian
and protectress of other heroes: of Saccard and then, to
some extent, of Maxime; she would willingly play the same
role for Renée. She had even begun to do so without Renée's
knowledge, when she arranged for her marriage to Saccard,
thus impelling her over the threshold. She would be "la
complice de la seconde femme de son frère, un rôle qu'elle
ambitionnait depuis le jour du mariage" (140).

Once, Renée nearly falls under the influence of the

²Campbell, Hero, p. 73.
guardian and might well have profited greatly from such a step had she fully surrendered herself to the protectorship that was offered. But she surrenders only partially and only momentarily. The event is a curious one. Renée, while walking along the streets of Paris from her father's house to her own, encounters a young man with whom she has a brief affair. Mme Sidonie believes that because their affair took place in her apartment, Renée is now under her protection. She is wrong.

... Cette pauvre Mme Sidonie avait eu un mécompte. Tout en maquignonrant le mariage, elle espérait... en faire une de ses clientes ... sa consternation fut grande, lorsque, après avoir laissé un mois au ménage pour s'installer, elle comprit qu'elle arrivait déjà trop tard, en s'apercevant Mme de Lauwerens trônant au milieu du salon. (140)

Mme de Lauwerens is another high-class procurress in Paris at this time, but she uses more modern methods of getting clients together, socializing with the friends for whom she works. "C'était l'école classique, la femme en vieille robe noire portant des billets doux au fond de son cabas, mise en face de l'école moderne, de la grande dame qui vend ses amies dans son boudoir en buvant une tasse de thé. L'école moderne triompha" (141). But in the novel, the modern school lacks what the classical (i.e. the mythic) has. The procurress is only a worldly human figure whose vocation happens to be the same as that of the guardian; she herself is not a guardian figure. She in no
way lends aid to the hero(ine), and she disappears as quickly as she appears. The classical school is more than this: the classical procuress here is an agent of destiny, a guardian and protectress who will not, in the long run, be overcome.

Renée refuses Sidonie's attempts to become her protectress and these refusals have the effect of keeping her cut off from her quest. Undaunted by heroic refusals, however, the guardian keeps trying.

The guardian, often in the form of a magician or shaman, dresses in magical costumes and since "the yonder world is a place of everlasting night, the ceremonial of the shaman has to take place after dark." This particular ceremonial is nearly always the representation of a healing of the sick. Mme Sidonie's next attempt to get her sister-in-law under her wing, is strikingly similar to such a ceremonial.  

Mme Sidonie ne venait généralement qu'à la nuit tombée. Son frère avait pourtant obtenu qu'elle mit des robes de soie. Mais, on ne savait comment, la soie qu'elle portait avait beau sortir du magasin, elle ne paraissait jamais neuve.... Renée, dont elle ne pouvait faire une cliente raisonnable, résignée aux nécessités de la vie, l'intéressait. Elle la visitait régulièrement, avec des sourires discrets de médecin qui ne veut pas effrayer un malade en lui apprenant le nom

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1Campbell, Hero, p. 99.

2For a fuller description of a ceremony of this kind, see Campbell, Hero, pp. 98-101.
de son mal. Elle s'apitoyait sur ses petites misères, comme sur des bobos qu'elle guérirait immédiatement, si la jeune femme voulait...

--En attendant, dit la jeune femme avec une pointe d'ironie, vous devriez bien me faire prêter cent mille francs... Je pourrais payer mon tailleur qui me tourmente beaucoup.

--Cent mille francs se trouvent, répondit tranquillement Mme Sidonie. Il ne s'agit que d'y mettre le prix." (186-187)

Renée again refuses, though Mme Sidonie does hit some deep chord in her psyche. This time the guardian reminds her of how nice it would be to have the protection she could provide and how dangerous it will be to refuse her.

Renée écoutait complaisamment cette voix molle qui sortait de l'ombre, comme l'écho encore vague de ses propres songeries. ...

"C'est Mme de Lauwerens qui a gâté votre existence. Vous n'avais jamais voulu me croire. Ah!... si vous ne vous étiez pas défini de moi. ..." (188)

The young heroine will not listen and again refuses. "Ne me parlez plus de tout cela," she says. "J'ai la tête bressée par les affaires " (189).

It is frightening to watch Renée continually refuse Mme Sidonie's help and, by her refusal, continually challenge the guardian. "The adventure is always and everywhere a passage beyond the veil of the known into the unknown; the powers that watch ... are dangerous; to deal with them is risky ... One had better not challenge ...

[them]." ¹

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¹Campbell, Hero, p. 82.
Since our hero(ine) would not accept intercourse with the protectress, she is now in grave danger from her.

Some time after this last refusal, Renée, as if realizing her mistake, goes to Mme Sidonie for help. At this point, she is in dire need of money, desperate for help from any quarter. As she arrives on Sidonie's doorstep, the guardian is on the point of leaving. She is so pleased, however, that Renée has finally succumbed, that she remains to speak with her of the proposed affair with M. de Saffré. For awhile it seems that Renée will do anything to obtain the money she needs, even give in to her own destiny.

"Pauvre chère, murmura [Sidonie]... Soyez donc forte, acceptez la vie... Voyons, laissez-moi arranger la petite affaire en question."
Renée se leva, torturant ses doigts, faisant craquer ses gants. Et elle resta debout, toute secouée par une cruelle lutte intérieure. Elle ouvrait les lèvres, pour accepter peut-être..." (220)

But, one more time, Renée refuses:

Renée, toute pâle, s'était redressée comme sous un coup de fouet. Une immense fierté lui remonta au cœur...
"Je m'en vais, dit-elle d'une voix brève.
Venez m'ouvrir la porte." (221)

This time, the protectress, the guardian of the quest, is vehemently angry at being thwarted and vows revenge.

Enfin, prise de colère elle-même, laissant voir au fond de ses yeux gris la sécheresse aigre de sa nature, elle s'écria:
"Mais enfin que voulez-vous que je lui dise, à cet homme?
"--Que je ne suis pas à vendre", répondit Renée qui avait un pied sur le trottoir.
Et il lui sembla entendre Mme Sidonie murmurer en refermant violemment la porte: "Eh! va donc, grue! Tu me paieras ça." (221-222)

The hero has for the last time challenged the guardian; and because of this fact she will not escape the adventure unscathed. Although the heroine realizes her mistake almost immediately:

La vérité était qu'elle souffrait cruellement. Maintenant, elle aurait mieux aimé tromper Maxime avec M. de Saffré. Chez Mme Sidonie, elle s'était révoltée, elle avait cédé à une fierté instinctive, au dégoût de ce marché grossier. Mais, les jours suivants, quand elle endura les angoisses de l'adultère, tout sombra en elle et elle se sentit si méprisable, qu'elle se serait livrée au premier homme qui aurait poussé la porte de la chambre aux pianos. (222)

it is too late. Often, once the guardian is offended, she disappears\(^1\), never to be of help again.

The problem that Renée has with accepting help is one that many heroes of ancient and primitive myth have, and one that inevitably leads to their downfall: the unforgivable sin of hubris. Henderson writes about this theme in traditional literature. "In examples of the hero's betrayal or defeat that occur in European mythology, the theme of ritual sacrifice is more specifically employed as

\(^{1}\)"They enjoy human lovers ... But like all supernatural brides, the minute the [hero]... offends in the least their whimsical notions of ... propriety, they disappear without a trace." Campbell, \textit{Hero}, pp. 79-80.
a punishment for *hybris*".¹

Renée is over-confident about her own capabilities, thinking that she can solve all her problems and face all her trials on the heroic journey with no outside help. Her refusal of aid from Sidonie is not the only example we see of her exaggerated pride. Her fallibility in this area is well-documented throughout the novel.

We have already seen her pride in her position;² she is so proud in fact that she isn't even impressed when others recognize the fact of her power over them: "'Eh! regarde ce monde qui rentre à Paris," she is told, "ce monde qui est à tes genoux. On te salue comme une reine...' En effet, un cavalier saluait Renée ... Mais, Renée se tourna à peine, haussa les épaules" (45). And later, she even expresses the feeling: "je suis tellement lasse de vivre ma vie de femme riche, adorée, saluée..." (47).

Her personal pride is no less evident. She is recognizant of her own beauty and does everything possible to enhance it.


²See supra., pp. 44-45.
Renée aimait ce petit salon ... Les tentures jaunes, au lieu d'éteindre sa chevelure pâle, la dorait de flammes étranges; sa tête se détachait au milieu d'une lueur d'aurore, toute rose et blanche s'éveillant dans la lumière du matin; et c'était pourquoi, sans doute, elle aimait cette pièce qui mettait sa beauté en relief. (69)

She is quite often caught looking at herself in mirrors, and when she does so, it is to admire herself. "En passant devant son miroir, elle s'arrêta, se regarda d'un mouvement machinal. Elle eut un sourire involontaire, et descendit" (54).

She is infinitely proud of her clothes, a symbol of her hubris, and spends most of her time and money throughout the novel on new and more outrageous clothing. Perhaps the most notable of the descriptions of her pride in her clothing and how she looks in it is the first one in which she attends a large party.

Quand Renée entra, il y eut un murmure d'admiration. Elle était vraiment divine. ... Les grâces de la tête et du corsage étaient adorables, au-dessus de ces jupes d'une ampleur royale et d'une richesse un peu chargée. Décolletée jusqu'à la pointes des seins, les bras découverts avec des touffes de violettes sur les épaules, la jeune femme semblait sortir toute nue de sa gaine de tulle et de satin, pareille à une de ces nymphes dont le buste se dégage des chênes sacrés; et sa gorge blanche, son corps souple était déjà si heureux de sa demi-liberté que le regard s'attendait toujours à voir peu à peu le corsage et les jupes glisser, comme le vêtement d'une baïgneuse, folle de sa chair. (55)

There is another passage which shows, perhaps better, her obsession with clothing and her appearance in which we read:
Mais ... Worms m'a apporté ce costume ce matin ... Je l'essaie et je le trouve assez réussi. Il a beaucoup de chic, n'est-ce pas?"
Elle s'était placée devant une glace ...
"Est-ce que c'est vraiment bien? ... Vous ne trouvez pas qu'il manque quelque chose, un rien, un noeud quelque part? ..."
... Puis, elle resta devant la glace, se contem-plant toujours ... (123)

Her hair is another source of unreasonable pride for Renée. "La jeune femme disait d'ordinaire que tout le visage est dans la chevelure. Elle soignait la sienne avec dévotion. Longtemps, la couleur l'en avait désolée. ...
Mais quand la mode des cheveux jaunes arriva, elle fut charmée, et pour faire croire qu'elle ne suivait pas la mode bêtement, elle jura qu'elle se teignait tous les mois" (124-125).

Although young and breathtaking, our heroine is so frightened of losing her beauty¹ that she feels great pride in anything that flatters her. She is proud and flattered by Maxime's beauty, because it is her handiwork. She is proud of giving him money and support and being his protectress because she does it so well. Even the meeting with the young stranger on the street leads to an affair because it is to her a source of pride. "[Elle] trouva l'aventure piquante, elle en fut flattée comme d'un hommage nouveau..."

¹On page 44 we see this fear of age makes her lose interest in life. "Je deviens vieille, mon cher enfant; j'aurai trente ans bientôt. C'est terrible. Je ne prends de plaisir à rien."
This pride, this sin of hubris, is what prevents Renée from taking Mme Sidonie's threat seriously. It is what makes her feel that she alone, with her clothes, her looks, her talents, and her money, can prevail and solve all of her problems, meet all of her tests, and be successful in finding the object of her quest, whatever it is. Ironically, it is this very sin (among others) which causes her journey to be an unsuccessful one.

A large problem looming in Renée's path, standing in the way of her quest, is an overwhelming boredom, which causes an inertia to take over her life, and thereby prevents her from moving on in search of her unknown treasure. "Not infrequently in ... myths ... we encounter [such a story]; for it is always possible to turn the ear to other interests. ... Walled in boredom ... the subject loses the power of significant affirmative action and becomes a victim to be saved."¹ The flowering of an adventure withers into an insignificant and meaningless routine of life. Renée is forever plagued with this obstacle; and is forever complaining about it.

"Vois-tu, je m'ennuie..." (43)
Renée regardait, les yeux fixes, comme si cet a-grandissement de l'horizon ... lui eussent fait sentir plus vivement le vide de son être.
Au bout d'un silence, elle répéta, avec l'ac-

¹Campbell, Hero, p. 59.
cent d'une colère sourde:
"Oh! je m'ennuie, je m'ennuie à mourir." (43-44)
"Je suis tellement lasse ... C'est à mourir."
(47)
"Le matin on s'ennuie à mourir." (121)
A vingt-huit ans, elle était déjà horriblement lasse. L ennui lui paraissait d'Autant plus insupportable, que ses vertus bourgeois profitaient des heures où elle s ennuyait pour se plaindre et l'inquiéter. (139)

She cannot seem to move on without some exterior impetus, which destiny, as we have seen, is willing to supply again and again.

The first stimulating assistance Renée receives is her rape out in the country and her subsequent, hasty marriage to Saccard. For a second time destiny saves her adventure from decay when Saccard decides to bring Maxime home from school. Renée at this time is full of anticipation, hoping that finally something will relieve her lassitude and animate her adventure once more. "C'est cela," she says when approached on the subject, "faites venir le gamin ... Il nous amusera un peu. Le matin, on s'ennuie à mourir " (121).

She throws herself into her new role as mother, spending her time teaching and instructing the boy, molding him into someone who could divert and amuse her.

"Je veux être une mère pour vous. Je réfléchissait à cela, en attendant mon tailleur qui était en conférence, et je me disais que je devais me montrer très bonne et vous élever tout à fait bien ... Ce sera gentil!" (122)
"... Mais il faudra m'écouter. D'abord vous laisserz pousser vos cheveux, et vous ne porterez plus cette affreuse tunique. Puis vous suivrez fidèlement mes leçons de bonnes manières. Je veux que vous soyez un joli jeune homme." (124)

For awhile the idea works. Young Maxime thrills his new mother with his progress and her new challenge to be a mother and a teacher entertains her thoroughly.

Elle battit les mains, rayonnante.
"C'est cela,... cria-t-elle.
...Sa belle-mère, les premiers jours, joua avec lui comme avec une poupée; elle le décrassa de sa province, et il faut dire qu'il y mit une bonne volonté extrême. Quand il parut, habillé de neuf des pieds à la tête par le tailleur de son père, elle poussa un cri de surprise joyeuse: il était joli comme un coeur ... " (124)

This type of amusement cannot last forever, of course, and soon, when Renée realizes that the boy is learning almost too quickly, growing up too swiftly, and that her quest is not for motherhood after all—that there is that unknown something else which she must seek—inertia again takes over her life. Boredom creeps up on her wherever she goes, whatever she does.

At this point, destiny tries again to propel her forward. Maxime comes home from school for good, and this time he is her friend and adviser. With this role change, Renée again finds her journey enjoyable and takes it up once more.

Alors la maison appartenait à Renée et à Maxime. Ils s'emparaient du cabinet du père; ils y déballaient les cartons des fournisseurs, et les
chiffons traînaient sur les dossiers ... Rarement on mangeait ensemble; sur les trois, deux couraient, s'oubliaient, ne revenait qu'à minuit. (132)

The meeting with Maxime, its ensuing pleasures and friendships do have one effect, albeit temporary, on Renée. Now when she is "bored to death" she begins searching with new zeal for her "something else". She is pulled from her lethargy from time to time and pushes on along, exploring as she goes. "Renée," we are told, "mit plus de fièvre dans sa recherche d'une jouissance inconnue" (142).

There comes a time, however, when carousing with Maxime and her other friends no longer draws her from her lethargy—even this amusement becomes increasingly tiresome. To ward off this boredom, she and Maxime create games in which they use a photo-album of their friends to analyze those friends, derogate them, and/or discuss which ones would make the best lovers. "Cet album ... quand on s'ennuyait, était un grand sujet de conversation ... La jeune femme l'ouvrait en baillant, pour la centième fois peut-être. Puis la curiosité se réveillait, et le jeune homme venait s'accouder derrière elle" (144).

Their games and discussions become more and more scandalous, more and more decadent, as they constantly try to keep Renée entertained. ". . . . . cet attrait qu'il y a pour un jeune homme et une jeune femme à descendre ensemble dans
le péché, en paroles seulement, les [ramenait] sans cesse aux sujets scabreux. Ils y jouissaient profondément d'une volupté qu'ils ne se reprochaient pas ... " (145).

But even this verbal perversion only fends off the paralyzing effects of boredom for a short while. Her lassitude becomes so very intense that even when she speaks of her former pleasures--balls, parties, even physical love--it is with disdain. Her desire for something else returns with a fury.

"[Je veux] autre chose, parbleu! ... Mais vois-tu, j'ai assez de bals, assez de soupers, assez de fêtes comme cela. C'est toujours la même chose. C'est mortel ... Les hommes sont assommants, oh! oui, assommants ..." (46)

Like other heroes, Renée's quest is for something beyond herself, something that is not "mortel," something larger than life (or death)––even larger than her life of excitement, decadence and luxury.

At this point, with no outside help (at present), the hero faces a dilemma. "All he can do is create new problems for himself and await the gradual approach of disintegration."² Like Briar Rose or Snow White she must wait to be awakened by some exterior force. Again, destiny provides

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¹See also p. 222. "Elle ... se plaisait aux raffinements de sa faute et ... rêvait volontiers un coin de paradis surhumain, où les dieux goûtaient leurs amours en famille..."

²Campbell, Hero, p. 59.
the way. A prince comes to awaken our Sleeping Beauty, the
heroine of our tale. His name is Maxime Saccard. What fol-
lows is the description of her awakening.

Et, sous la lumière vive, Renée songeait, en
regardant de loin Louise et Maxime. Ce n'était
plus la rêverie flottante, la grise tentation du
crépuscule, dans les allées fraîches du Bois. Ses
pensées n'étaient plus berçées et endormies ...
Maintenant un désir net, aigu, l'emplissait.

Un amour immense, un besoin de volupté, flottait dans cette nef close, où bouillait la sève ar-
dente des tropiques. La jeune femme était prise
dans ces noces puissantes de la terre ...

... À cette heure de vision nette, toutes ses
bonnes résolutions s'évanouissaient âjamas, l'ivr-
resse du dîner remontait à sa tête, impérieuse,
victorieuse, doublée par les flammes de la serre.
Elle ne songeait plus aux fraîcheurs de la nuit
qui l'avaient calmée, à ces ombres murmurantes
du parc, dont les voix lui avaient conseillé la
paix heureuse. Ses sens de femme ardente, ses ca-
prices de femme blasée s'éveillaient. Et, au-
dessus d'elle le grand sphinx de marbre noir ri-
ait d'un rire mystérieux, comme s'il avait lu le
désir enfin formulé qui galvanisait ce coeur mort,
le désir longtemps fuyant, "l'autre chose" vaime-
ment cherchée par Renée dans le bercement de sa
calèche, dans la cendre fine de la nuit tombante,
et que venait brusquement de lui révéler sous la
carté crue, au milieu de ce jardin de feu, la
vue de ... Maxime ...

..........................................................

Et les voix continuèrent, brutales, sonnant
étrangement sous les palmes tombantes des massifs.
Mais elles traversèrent comme un vain bruit le
rêve de Renée, devant laquelle se dressait, avec
l'appel du vertige, un jouissance inconnue, chau-
de de crime, plus âpre que toutes celles qu'elle
avait déjà épuisées, la dernière qu'elle eût en-
core à boire. Elle n'était plus lasse. (75-76)

Having been thus awakened from her childish lethar-
gy, Renée has passed yet another threshold. She now feels
ready to take on the unknown world and pass further tests
in order to accomplish her quest.

Passing over any threshold can be symbolic of self-annihilation; for one is dying to one world to be born into another. Not all heroes go directly into the world of magical wonders, however; some are swallowed instead by the whale, falling into the realm of night and must remain there for some time.

"The idea that the passage of the magical threshold is a transit into a sphere of rebirth is symbolized in the worldwide womb image of the belly of the whale."¹ For Renée this retreat into the womb is nothing new, considering that every time in her life that she has encountered something new she has fallen, or gone willingly, into the belly of the whale. It is not a terrifying experience or anything of the sort.² It is rather a return to the warmth and safety of the womb which she has never really left during her entire life.

When she was a child and her mother died, Renée was pushed out of the womb of home and family and into another womb—that of the convent, where she was insulated from the outside world and surrounded by religious women. She remains totally sheltered from life and from adventure.

¹Campbell, Hero, p. 90.

²Erich Neumann in The Great Mother, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1963), p. 46, calls this the "uterine paradise."
Even when she comes home from the convent school for vacations she is enclosed in her own little world.

Mais dans cette maison morte, dans ce cloître, il y avait un nid chaud et vibrant, un trou de soleil et de gaîté, un coin d'adorable enfance, de grand air, de lumière large. Il fallait monter une foule de petits escaliers, filer le long de dix à douze corridors, redescendre, remonter encore, faire un véritable voyage, et l'on arrivait enfin à une vaste chambre, à une sorte de belvédère bâti sur le toit, derrière l'hôtel, au-dessus du quai de Béthune ... Pendant les vacances, Renée vivait là, dans le bain jaune de ce bon soleil ... La chambre devint un paradis, toute résonante du chant des oiseaux et du babill des petites. On la leur avait cédée en toute propriété. Elles disaient "notre chambre"; elles étaient chez elles; elles allaient jusqu'à s'y enfermer à clef pour se bien prouver qu'elles en étaient les uniques maîtresses. Quel coin de bonheur! (117-118)

From this warm and secluded womb she is shuttled back to the convent school when vacations are over, to the great relief of her family.

Forgotten and unloved by her parent figures, she finds solace and comfort in the womb of the church until she is forced out, at the age of nineteen, only to be violated far from home and family and thrust into a new sort of womb: marriage to an older man, now seemingly very wealthy, who will indulge her every whim.

Later, when she hazards to venture away from the safety of the womb of marriage, it is only to enter another womb. Renée, out walking one day, as we have seen, chances to meet a young man with whom she has a brief affair.
But even during that meeting, she takes refuge in Mme Sido-
nie's apartment, the very picture of a warm, dark womb. The
apartment/boutique is sheltered from view from the street
by lace curtains, giving it "l'air discret et voilé d'une
pièce d'attente, s'ouvrant sur quelque temple inconnu" (86).
This boutique, narrow, dark and mysterious, veiled with lace,
leads by a narrow, hidden staircase to the dark and dingy
bedroom. It is in this female organ that Renée hides, even
when venturing out of one womb to go onward in her quest
for that "something else" which she desires.

Later, after having been awakened by the "Prince"
this Sleeping Beauty should leave her constant, but constant-
ly changing, womb. Ironically, however, it is to the most
obvious womb-like enclosure that she runs immediately upon
being roused. Having realized suddenly what she thinks is
finally the object of her quest, she retreats directly into
her bedroom and remains enclosed there for days. "Elle fit
fermer les rideaux, parla à son médecin de nausées et de
douleurs de tête, refusa absolument de sortir pendant deux
jours" (157).\footnote{1}

(This seclusion is hardly an isolated incident; Re-
née has been seen often to withdraw into her room in order

\footnote{1The symbolism of her retreating into darkness and
awakening again on the third day, is obvious.}
to be restored to normal. It is as if she is recharging therein her psychic batteries.

A vingt-huit ans, elle était déjà horriblement lasse. L ennui lui paraissait ... insupportable ... Elle fermait sa porte, elle avait des migraines affreuses. Puis, quand la porte se rouvrait, c'était un flot de soie et de dentelles qui s'en échappait à grand tapage, une créature de luxe et de joie, sans un souci ni une rougeur au front. (139)
C'était là son refuge aux heures graves. (175.).

This time we find the same phenomenon. After days in retirement, she emerges, recharged. "Le troisième jour, il la trouva dans le petit salon, rose, souriante, l'air calme et reposé " (157).

The room in which these strange rebirths occur is so feminine and womb-like and is described in such detail by the author, that we shall discuss it at some length here.

One of the first things said about the room, and oft repeated, is that it is almost stiflingly warm.

Il faisait très chaud dans la chambre. (185)
Il lui fallait des brasiers ardents, une chaleur suffocante ... (185)
Elle se fit faire un grand feu, elle ... passait la journée dans sa chambre. (175)
...comme il faisait très chaud dans la pièce, elle ouvrit la fenêtre ... (53)
"Mais vous étouffez ici!" (186)
"On étouffe ici. Quelle idée de venir comploter quelqu'une de vos farces dans ce bain de vapeur!" (285)

We are told that the heat helps in renewing her spirits.¹

¹In Eliade, Naissances mystiques, we read that this preoccupation with heat has very old bases. "Il y a des raisons de croire que 'l'échauffement' ... constitue une ex-
"Dans cet air brûlant, dans ce bain de flammes, elle ne souffrait presque plus" (185-186) and, later: "La chaleur, dans la pièce, devenait de plus en plus étouffante ... Elle ne souffrait plus du tout" (190).

Scarcely less frequently do we see the room described as dark and shadowy. "Mme Sidonie ... [glissait] dans l'ombre de la pièce ... " (186). "Renée écoutait ... cette voix molle qui sortait de l'ombre ..." (188). We read of her "grand lit obscur" (195) and that she purposely put "un crépuscule" (193) into her decoration of the room.

The darkness and warmth of the enclosure easily evoke womb associations, but the images in other descriptions go further in their feminine symbolism. Everything therein is sumptuous: there are lace, velvet, silk, fluffy pillows, thick carpeting, boxes, armoires, vases, glasses, flowers and myriads of drapes dominating the room, making

pérence extrêmement archaïque. En effet, un grand nombre de primitifs se représentent le pouvoir magico-religieux comme 'brûlant' et l'expriment par des termes qui signifient 'chaleur', 'brûlure', 'très chaud', etc. C'est pour cette raison que les medicine-men et les chamans boivent de l'eau salée ou pimentée et mangent des plantes extrêmement piquantes: ils s'efforcent ainsi d'augmenter leur "chaleur" intérieure. Que cette 'chaleur' magique corresponde à une expérience réelle, on en a la preuve...les chamans sont réputés 'maîtres du feu': ils avalent les charbons brûlants, il touchent du fer rouge, ils marchent sur le feu, etc." pp. 185-186. Eliade goes on, through the next several pages, discussing the powers of heat in more "civilized" societies. See pp. 182-188.
everything look round and soft.

Everywhere there are dark, moist corners, alcoves and niches wherein one could hide. It seems, when you enter, that you are entering "quelque grande couche chaude et moïte" (193). The room is filled with dampness, "[emplissée] pour la journée ... d'une moiteur, d'une odeur de chair fraîche et mouillée" (194).

The colors she chooses are feminine, womb colors—pink and grey. The room is described in these colors over and over again. In a space of three pages the color grey is mentioned in connection with her room six times and pink no less than seventeen.

The description is fascinating in its thoroughness, its richness of detail and in its symbolism.

L'appartement particulier de Renée était un nid de sole et de dentelle, une merveille de luxe coquet. Un boudoir très petit précédait la chambre à coucher. Les deux pièces n'en faisaient qu'une ou du moins le boudoir n'était guère que le seuil de la chambre, une grande alcove, garnie de chaises longues, sans porte pleine, fermée par une double portière ... Un grand lit gris et rose, dont on ne voyait pas le bois recouvert d'étoffe et capitonné, et dont le chevet s'appuyait au mur, emplissait toute une moitié de la chambre avec son flot de draperies, ses guipures et sa soie brochée de bouquets, tombant du plafond jusqu'au tapis. On aurait dit une toilette de femme, arrondie, découpée, accompagnée de poufs, de noeuds, de volants; et ce large rideau qui se gonflait, pareil à une jupe, faisait rêver

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1This may be seen as a symbol of the vagina leading into the womb.
à quelque grande amoureuse penchée, se pâmant, près de choi sur les oreillers. Sous les rideaux, c'était un sanctuaire, des batistes plissées à petits plis, une neige de dentelles, toutes sortes de choses délicates et transparentes, qui se noyaient dans un demi-jour religieux. A côté du lit, de ce monument dont l'ampleur dévote rappelait une chapelle ornée pour quelque fête, les autres meubles disparaissaient...

Cette chambre avait une harmonie douce, un silence étouffé. Aucune note trop aiguë, reflet de métal, dorure claire, ne chantait dans la phrase rêveuse du rose et du gris. ... Ce luxe adouci, ces couleurs et ces objets que le goût de Renée avait voulu tendres et souriants, mettaient là un crépuscule, un jour d'alcôve, dont on a tiré les rideaux. Il semblait que le lit se continuât, que la pièce entière fût un lit immense, avec ses tapis, ses peaux d'ours, ses sièges capitonnés, ses tentures matelassées qui continuaient la mollesse du sol le long des murs, jusqu'au plafond. Et, comme dans un lit, la jeune femme laissait là, sur toutes ces choses, l'empreinte, la tiédeur, le parfum de son corps. Quand on écartait la double portière du boudoir, il semblait qu'on soulevât une courtepointe de soie, qu'on entrât dans quelque grande couche encore chaude et moite, où l'on retrouvait, sur les toiles fines, les formes adorables, le sommeil et les rêves d'une Parisienne de trente ans. ... Le gris rose de la chambre à coucher s'éclairait ici, devenait un blanc rose, une chair nue. ... La jeune femme aimait à rester là, jusqu'à midi, presque nue. La tente ronde, elle aussi, était nue. Cette baignoire rose, ces tables et ces cuvettes roses, cette mousseline du plafond et des murs, sous laquelle on croyait voir couler un sang rose, prenaient des rondeurs de chair, des rondeurs d'épaules et de seins; et, selon l'heure de la journée, on eût dit la peau neigeuse d'une enfant ou la peau chaude d'une femme. C'était une grande nudité. Quand Renée sortait du bain, son corps blond n'ajoutait qu'un peu de rose à toute cette chair rose de la pièce.

During her affair with Maxime, which she believes is the answer to her quest, she scarcely ventures out of this womb/room except when she goes with him to the greenhouse.
to make love. It, too, is a huge womb where she can remain, 
safe, warm and secluded.

The imagery is provocative, overpowering. It is dark there, safe; it resembles a nest: "...tout autour, 
du noir s'entassait; les berceaux, avec leur draperies de 
lianes, se noyaient dans les ténèbres, ainsi que des nids 
de reptiles endormis" (75). It is always oppressively hot 
there—so much so that one night Maxime actually faints from 
the heat. The heat is described as "étouffante" (75), "suf-
focante" (200), "sombre" (200), and "humide" (200). The 
greenhouse is a veritable "terre brûlante" (200), and a 
"couche enflammée" (200), "bouillant étrangement au milieu 
[du] froid muet" (200), in which only passionate love takes 
place. The hottest night spent in it, "Ils eurent une nuit 
d'amour fou " (200).

But the greenhouse is more: not only is it a womb 
in which safety to hide one's love, it physically loves a-
long with them. The greenhouse is not a symbol of woman, 
it is woman. And the womanhood of the greenhouse is what 
tempts Renée.

Les larges fleurs pourpres. ... on eût dit des 
bouches sensuelles de femme qui s'ouvraient, les 
levres rouges, molles et humides, de quelque Mes-
saline géante, que des baisers meurtrissaient, et 
qui toujours renaissaient avec leur sourire avide 
et saignant... (74) 
...un besoin de volupté flottait dans cette nef 
close, où bouillait la sève ardente des tropiques. 
La jeune femme était prise dans les noces puis-
santes de la terre, qui engendraient autour d'elle
ces verdures noires ... et les couches âcrés de cette mer de feu. ...
Une buée ... lui chauffait la peau, comme l'at-
touchement d'une main moite de volupté... Et plus
que l'étouffement chaud de l'air ... c'étaient
surtout les odeurs qui la brisaient. ...: sueurs
humaines, haleines de femmes, senteurs de cheve-
lures ... Mais, dans cette musique étrange des
odeurs, la phrase mélodique qui revenait toujours,
dominant, ... c'était cette odeur humaine, péné-
trante, sensuelle, cette odeur d'amour qui s'é-
chappe le matin de la chambre close de deux jeu-
nes époux. (75)

The greenhouse is woman in estrus -- it enters into their
love making--it makes love along with them, carries them
along in its own passion.

La serre aimait, brûlait avec eux. Dans l'air a-
lourd, dans la clarté blanchâtre de la lune, ils
voyayaient le monde étrange des plantes qui les en-
touraient se mouvoir confusément, échanger des é-
treintes ... Puis, autour d'eux, les Palmiers,
les grands Bambous de l'Inde, se haussaient, al-
laient dans le cintre, où ils se penchaient et
mêlaient leurs feuilles avec des attitudes chance-
lantes d'amants lassés. Plus bas, les Fougères,
les Pteridés, les Alsophiles, étaient comme des
dames vertes, avec leur larges jupes garnies de
volants réguliers, qui ... attendaient l'amour. A
côté d'elles, les feuilles torses, tachées de rou-
ge, des Bégonias, et les feuilles blanches, en
fer de lance, des Caladiums, mettaient une suite
vague de meurtrissures et de pâleurs, que les a-
mants ne s'expliquaient pas, et où ils retrou-
vaient parfois des rondeurs de hanches et de gen-
noux, vautrés à terre, sous la brutalité des ca-
resses sanglantes. ... Aux quatre angles, à l'en-
droit où les rideaux de lianes ménageaient des ber-
ceaux, leur rêve charnel s'affolait encore, et les
jets souples des Vanilles, des Coques du Levant...
etaient les bras interminables d'amoureux qu'on ne
voyait pas, et qui allongeaient éperdument leur
étreinte, pour amener à eux toutes les joies é-
parses. Ces bras sans fin pendaient de lassitu-
de, se nouaient dans un spasme d'amour, se cher-
chaient, s'enroulaient, comme pour le rut d'une
foule. C'était le rut immense de la serre...
...Maxime et Renée, les sens faussés, se sentaient emportés dans ces noces puissantes de la terre. Le sol, à travers la peau d'ours, leur brûlait le dos, et, des hautes palmes, tombaient sur eux des gouttes de chaleur. La sève qui montait aux flancs des arbres les pénétrait, eux aussi, leur donnait des désirs fous de croissance immédiate, de reproduction gigantesque. Ils entraient dans le rut de la serre...

S'ils avaient fermé les yeux, si la chaleur suffocante et la lumière pâle n'avaient pas mis en eux un dépravation de tous les sens, les odeurs eussent suffi à les jeter dans un éréthisme ... extraordinaire. ... Et ils restaient ivres de cette odeur de femme amoureuse, qui trainait dans la serre, comme dans une alcôve où la terre enfantait...

Et, au milieu de la peau noire, le corps de Renée blanchissait, dans sa pose de grande chatte accroupie, l'échine allongée, les poignets tendus, comme des jarrets souples et nerveux. Elle était toute gonflée de volupté ... Elle n'était plus qu'une fille brûlante de la terre. (200 - 203)

Zola truly believed in the continuity of nature\footnote{"Ah! bonne terre, prends-moi, toi qui es la mère commune, l'unique source de la vie! toi l'éternelle, l'immortelle, où circule l'âme du monde, cette sève épandue jusque dans les pierres, et qui fait des arbres nos grands frères immobiles! ... Oui, je veux me perdre en toi, c'est toi que je sens là, sous mes membres, m'étreignant et m'enflammant, c'est toi seule qui seras dans mon ouvrage comme la force première, le moyen et le but, l'arche immense, où toutes les choses s'animent du souffle de tous les âtres.... Est-ce bête, une âme à chacun de nous, quand il y a cette grande âme!" quoted in P. Brady, "L'Oeuvre": roman sur les arts, p. 259. This corresponds to the archetypal image of the Earth being Mother of all living things. Water circulates in her as blood in humans, rocks become her bones, the air her breath, the ground her skin and the plants her hair. This archetypal image is found universally in all cultures.} and it is fitting that he wrote here that it is nature, literally, that leads Renée along the paths of the adventure and teaches her that this ostensibly is the object of her quest.
We wonder if Renée ever completely understands what her goal is. We cannot but think that she does not, for there are indications that Renée is, or should be, lesbian; yet, since she never really realizes this potential homosexuality—which is probably that "other thing" for which she searches but can never name—her goal can never be reached, the boon never attained and the quest never fulfilled.

The indications of these homosexual tendencies are at times subtle, but they are all-pervasive throughout the novel. Hardly a page in Renée’s story goes by where there isn’t some hint of this proclivity. Taking her story chronologically, the first clue we have that something is, or will be, wrong in our hero’s sexual life is given when we find that at a very early age she has been virtually rejected by her entire family. We know nothing of her mother except that she died young. Her father is aloof, severe, and somber. He lives an entirely solitary life, even though his sister eventually comes to live in his house. He is silent, strict, "d’une sévérité triste" (217), "[d’une] roi-deur et [d’]une sévérité [profonde]" (96). We are told that he has some secret sorrow which affects his life day to day. "Quelque drame secret, dont la blessure saignait toujours, dut assombrir encore la figure du magistrat" (97). Throughout Renée’s entire life he rejects her, is angry with her
pregnancy, is cold towards her husband (who is not a repub-
lican as he is), and never comes to visit them\(^1\) -- in fact,
he hardly ever leaves his home for any reason.

The most significant of the father's rejections in
the sexual development of his daughter is that time when,
as a young child whose mother has just died, she is sent
off to a convent school where she is "oubliée en pension"
(97). With no one loving female figure and no male figure
at all in her life, how could any child develop normally?

Her Aunt Elisabeth (who raised Renée's sister) is
also antipathetic towards her. Aunt Elisabeth "se prit
d'une tendresse maternelle pour Christine ... [Mais] sa tante
poussait un grand soupir de soulagement quand elle... reconduisait [Renée] enfin chez les dames de la Visitation" (97).
The aunt feels some guilt, as we have already seen, for Re-
née's plight at the age of nineteen--"elle s'accusa, comme
si elle s'était sentie complice..."(97)--but not enough to
spend any time with her. She arranges for the wedding,
pays for the husband, but only in a effort to get rid of
Renée and thereby get rid of her guilt.

\(^1\)"On ne vous voit plus, mon père..."
"... nous n'avons pas les mêmes idées, et je suis mal à l'aise
dans votre belle maison ..." ...Mais le vieillard haussa
les épaules, comme pour dire que son mécontentement avait
des causes beaucoup plus graves ... Puis il se leva, re-
dressa sa haute taille, et marcha lentement sans regarder
sa fille davantage." (217)
Renée is not rejected by the convent school; in fact, she spends many years there, in the presence of nuns and girls her age, most of the latter of whom are depraved ("[Ils]... se rappellent leurs premières escapades. Ils finirent par devenir des fanfarons de mauvaises moeurs. Renée avoua qu'au pensionnat les petites filles étaient très polissonnes."[145]) and some of whom, including Renée's best friend, Adeline, are already showing lesbian tendencies. Renée often tells the story of Adeline's lesbian relationship with Suzanne Haffner in the convent school. Maxime remembers:

"Moi, je me souviendrai toujours de cet après-midi où tu m'as conté l'aventure d'Adeline, au couvent, quand elle écrivait des lettres à Suzanne, et qu'elle signait comme un homme: Arthur d'Espanet, en lui proposant de l'enlever. ..." (197)

All through her years at the convent her nature soaks in the depravity.

Elevée au logis, elle eût sans doute émoussé par la religion ou par quelque autre satisfaction nerveuse les pointes des désirs dont les piqûres l'affolaient par instants. ... Chez les dames de la Visitation, libre, l'esprit vagabondant dans les voluptés mystiques de la chapelle et dans les amitiés charnelles de ses petites amies, elle s'était fait une éducation fantastique, apprenant le vice, y mettant la franchise de sa nature, détraquant sa jeune cervelle ... (138)

Even when she is home, in the cold austere house

1Italics mine.
that is her home, during those years, the only person close to her is her sister Christine whom she loves dearly. A description of their home, the sexual symbolism of their house and their room and the way they feel about it are indicative of the sexual problems she must be facing ("Mais dans cette maison morte, dans ce cloître, il y avait un nid chaud et vibrant, etc. See above p. 109). The girls dress alike, play alone together in their identical clothes, until other girls tease Renée, at which time she begins wearing much more revealing clothing at the convent among her girl friends, and it is then that she becomes enamoured of showing off her own flesh.¹

All during her young years, then, she is deprived of the teaching and the love of her parents and parent figures. There are no means for her to be initiated into society and no way for her to learn normal sexual habits (which is the main education received at the time of female initiation). Eliade writes an interesting passage about how young girls learn such things.

Pour revenir aux rites féminins de puberté, ajoutons que pendant la période de réclusion, les novices apprennent les chansons et danses rituelles, et aussi certain métiers spécifiquement féminins, en premier lieu le filage et le tissage. Le symbolisme de ces métiers est hautement significatif ... Il existe une solidarité mystique entre les

¹See La Curée, p. 287.
Even the first sexual encounter is supposed to take place in the weaving house among women.

Renée seems instinctively to realize this, for after the raping incident she feels she should have stayed at home with her aunt and spent time learning feminine things. "Certes, elle serait devenue meilleure, si elle était restée à tricoter auprès de la tante Elisabeth. Et elle entendait le tic-tac régulier des aiguilles de la tante, tandis qu'elle regardait fixement dans la glace pour lire cet avenir de paix qui lui avait échappé." (287)

Once she has had sexual relations with a man, far away from home and family, she feels filthy, fallen. "Ce viol ... la fit ensuite se mépriser, et fut pour beaucoup dans l'abandon de toute sa vie. Elle pensa qu'elle n'avait plus à lutter contre le mal, qu'il était en elle ..." (138).

Renée enjoys being married to Saccard because she doesn't have to sleep with him, or even see him very often. She can spend all her time with her lady friends. "Avec un tel mari, Renée était aussi peu mariée que possible. Elle restait des semaines entières sans presque le voir. ... Il était parfait..." (137)

1Eliade, Naissances mystiques, pp. 100-101.

2"Il mettait à peine une fois par mois les pieds dans la chambre de Renée, et toujours pour quelque délicate question d'argent." (176)
While she is married to Saccard she goes from one man to another, never happy with any of them.

Ses premiers amants ne l'avaient pas gâtée; trois fois elle s'était crue prise d'une grande passion; l'amour éclatait dans sa tête comme un pétard, dont les étincelles n'allaient pas jusqu'au coeur. Elle était folle un mois ... puis ... elle sentait un silence écrasant, un vide immense. Le premier, le jeune duc de Rozan, ne fut guère qu'un déjeuner au soleil. Renée ... le trouva en tête à tête absolument nul, déteint, assommant. M. Simpson, attaché à l'ambassade américaine, qui vint ensuite, faillit la battre ... Puis, elle accueillit le comte de Chibray, un aide de camp de l'empereur, ... qui commençait à lui peser singulièrement ... Elle en arriva ainsi à M. de Mussy, l'être le plus insignifiant du monde ... elle ne sut jamais bien comment elle s'était livrée à lui... (139)

She finds all men horrible. "Les hommes sont assommants, oh! oui, assommants..."(46).

The only man she ever loves is Maxime and he is really female. The references to his femininity are far too numerous for it to be feasible to mention them all. Following are just a few of the more salient:

Renée l'appelait "mademoiselle", sans savoir que, six mois auparavant, elle aurait dit juste. (125) Maxime, qu'elles toléraient et qu'elles aimaient pour son air de fille, était le seul homme admis dans le cénacle. (129)

The lesbian, Adeline d'Espanet, says "Voilà un garçon qui aurait dû naître fille" (130). Once Renée even dresses him as a woman, and introduces him to her women friends as

\[1\text{See above, pp. 58-59, 69, also.}\]
her female cousin.¹

...le lundi était réservé aux amies intimes. Les hommes n'étaient pas admis. Maxime seul assistait à ces parties fines qui avaient lieu dans le petit salon. Un soir, elle eut l'étonnante idée de l'habeiller en femme et de le présenter comme une de ses cousines. Adeline, Suzanne ... et les autres amies qui étaient là, se levèrent, saluèrent, étonnées par cette figure qu'elles reconnaissaient vaguement. Puis lorsqu'elles comprirent, elles rirent beaucoup, elle ne voulurent absolument pas que le jeune homme allât se déshabiller. Elles le gardèrent avec ses jupes, le taquinant, se pré-tant à des plaisanteries équivoques. (209)

When Renée makes love to him, it is she who is the man, and Maxime is the girl, and Renée enjoys it:

Renée était l'homme... C'était pour elle un con-tinuel étonnement du désir, une surprise des sens, une bizarre sensation de malaise et de plaisir aigu. Elle ne savait plus; elle revenait avec des doutes à sa peau fine, à son cou potelé, à ses abandons et à ses évanouissements. Elle é-prouva alors une heure de plénitude. (200)

and she most often makes love with (if not to) the woman-
hood of the greenhouse.

A further indication is that a woman who is a self-
admited hater of men and who is extremely masculine herself,

¹This also is a necessary step in some initiations. As Eliade tells us "les néophytes sont habillés en jeunes filles, et ... les filles en cours d'initiation portent des vêtements d'hommes." Primitive tribes also practice ritual nudity, especially when segregated. Both of these rituals (readily seen in both Renée and Maxime) are generally inter-preted as making the neophyte, before becoming Man or Woman, a Totality, from which the desired state is more eas-ily attained. Androgyines are considered superior to the separate sexes because they are the incarnation of totality. Naissances mystiques, pp. 64-65.
Mme Sidonie, is quite evidently "in love with" Renée. "Tout en maquignonnant le mariage, elle espérait épouser un peu Renée, elle aussi..." (140). Whenever she speaks with Renée, it is in the dulcet tones of a lover.

"Eh! ma toute belle, murmura Mme Sidonie en se glissant dans l'ombre de la pièce, mais vous étouffez, ici! ... Toujours vos douleurs névral-giques, n'est-ce pas? C'est le chagrin. Vous prenez la vie trop au coeur." (186)
"...Et je vous aime comme mes yeux, ma toute bel-le. Vous avez un pied ravissant. Vous allez vous moquer de moi, mais je veux vous conter mes fo-lies: quand il y a trois jours que je ne vous ai vue, il faut absolument que je vienne pour vous admirer; oui, il me manque quelque chose; j'ai besoin de me rassasier de vos beaux cheveux, de votre visage si blanc et si délicat, de votre taille mince ... Vrai, je n'ai jamais vu de tail-le pareille."
Renée finit par sourire. Ses amants n'avaient pas eux-mêmes cette chaleur, cette extase receuil- lie, en lui parlant de sa beauté. (188)

Renée, as we see here, is mostly flattered by these attentions, but when it becomes clear that Mme Sidonie wants to palm her off on a man, she is revolted:

"Vous ne lui avez pas dit au moins que j'étais ici?" demanda la jeune femme inquiète.
La courtière sembla surprise, et très naïvement:
"Mais si ..."
Renée, toute pâle, s'était redressée comme sous un coup de fouet. .... Ce bruit de bottes, qu'elle entendait plus brutal dans la chambre d'à- côté, l'exaspérait.
"Je m'en vais, dit-elle d'une voix brève. Ve- nez m'ouvrir la porte." (221)

And then there is a woman that we are told Renée loves: it is Céleste, her personal maid. We see that "el-

1See supra., p. 26.
le se fut prise d'affection pour Céleste ... " (226), and that Céleste does not like men. "Moi, madame!... Je ne veux pas d'un homme. ... Je ne suis pas une bête, allez " (226). When Renée feels badly, Céleste does more for her than her job would require--she puts her to bed, and stays all night with her to soothe her (175). When Renée stays days at a time locked in her room, it is with Céleste. Maxime teases her about it.

"Eh, bien, t'es-tu beaucoup amusée avec Céleste? lui demanda-t-il, faisant allusion au long tête-à-tête qu'elle venait d'avoir avec sa femme de chambre.
--Oui, répondit-elle, c'est une fille précieuse. Elle a toujours les mains glacées; elle me les posait sur le front et calmait un peu ma pauvre tête.
--Mais c'est un remède, cette fille-là." (157-158)

It is after these days, secluded in her womb/room alone with Céleste, that Renée feels better. After one of these episodes, Zola says "elle ne se plaignait plus de lassitude et de dégoût. One eût dit seulement qu'elle avait fait quelque chute secrète, dont elle ne parlait pas, mais qu'elle confessait par un mépris plus marqué pour elle-même et par une dépravation plus risquée dans ses caprices de grande mondaine" (158). Now, in this particular passage, we are given to believe that it might be because she has made up her mind to seduce Maxime that she feels this strange sort of relief--but so many other incidents occur when Céleste again comforts her and calms her, that we cannot
but feel that it is Céleste who fulfills some deep needs in her and that her desire for Maxime is just delusion on her part.

After Maxime and her other lovers have raped, brutalized and psychologically tortured her, Renée turns more directly than ever to Céleste.

Dans l'écroulement de ses tendresses, il vint un moment où Renée n'eut plus que sa femme de chambre à aimer. ... Peut-être cette fille, qui était tout ce qu'il restait autour d'elle de l'amour de Maxime, lui rappelait-elle des heures de jouissances ... Et elle se trouvait d'autant plus heureuse de son dévouement, qu'elle la savait ... sans amant ...

Elle lui disait parfois, dans ses heures tristes: "Va, ma fille, c'est toi qui me fermeras les yeux." (303-304)

But Céleste is unmoved. She has seen her mistress too often with men to feel close to her.

"Moi, Madame, je n'aurais pas compris la vie comme vous. Je me le suis dit bien souvent, quand je vous trouvais avec Monsieur Maxime: "Est-il possible qu'on soit si bête pour les hommes!" Ça finit toujours mal ... Ah! bien, c'est moi qui me suis toujours méfiée! ...Aussi, dès que je voyais un homme, je prenais un manche à balai ... Je n'ai jamais osé vous dire tout ça. D'ailleurs, ça ne me regardait pas. Vous étiez bien libre..." (305)

Céleste quits her job and goes back to the country. Renée is heart-broken, "elle pleura à chaudes larmes ..." (304) when Céleste leaves. At the station, as Céleste is boarding the train to leave, they speak only about a homosexual man whom they both know and about his escapades; Renée kisses Céleste, and she is gone. The young lady, a-
bandonned by this woman whom she loves, becomes desperate, afraid even of her own well-beloved room.

Et quand le train fut parti, désespérée, elle ne sut plus que faire; ses journées lui semblaient s'étendre devant elle, comme cette grande salle, où elle était demeurée seule. Elle remonta dans son coupé, elle dit au cocher de retourner à l'hôtel. Mais, en chemin, elle se ravisa; elle eut peur de sa chambre... (306)

Céleste is not the only woman Renée has loved. In her younger years she loved Adeline d'Espanet, an obvious lesbian, and the rest of her life she is fascinated by Adeline and her lover Suzanne and by any mention of, or allusion to, homosexuality.

The "inseparables", as they are called in society (they even have rented an apartment together [186]), are Renée's closest friends. Once, when she is terribly depressed, she will not speak to any men, but she catches sight of these ladies in a most loving situation, and smiles.¹ She seems to prefer the marquise, Adeline, who refers to Renée as "ma chère belle" (56), and whose husband never accompanies her into society. She goes out only with Suzanne (59). Whenever there are men around, the three of them find the conversation tedious. "Elle s'ennuyait. Les hommes graves l'assommaient. Mme d'Espanet et Mme Haffner lui lançaient des regards désespérés" (63). They much prefer

¹See pp. 42-43 in La Curée.
their own company; and when they are alone, they speak together of things that are only whispered. ¹ These two women are the only friends allowed into Renée’s bedroom when she has retired there. Only once, are they, too, refused entrance. ²

She enters into their society with delight, wherever they may be. However, their preferred meeting place is the courtier Worms' boutique, which all the women consider a temple dedicated to some secret divinity. The women worship there so often that they are quite at home. "Ces dames étaient chez elles, parlaient librement, et lorsqu'elles se pelotonnaient autour de la pièce, on aurait dit un vol blanc de lesbiennes ... " (129). When these women gather together, whether it be at Worms' shop or in their own salons, men are never allowed. The only man who is ever admitted to the circle is Maxime, because Maxime "aurait dû naître fille" (130).

When she and Maxime are alone, they often find their conversation turns to women in general, and these two women in particular. Maxime regales Renée with stories about wo-

¹ "À cette heure, elle était là avec ses intimes. ... Il n'y avait plus, dans le cénacle, que des têtes folles. Renversée à demi au fond d'une causeuse, Renée écoutait les confidences de son ami Adeline, qui lui parlait à l'oreille, avec des mines de chatte et des rires brusques." (69)

² "Elle avait l'ordre de ne laisser entrer personne; elle congédia même les inséparables, Adeline d'Espanet et Suzanne Haffner, de retour d'un déjeuner qu'elles venaient de faire ensemble, dans un pavillon loué par elles à Saint-Germain." (186)
men; he is a veritable catalogue of the women of Paris and Renée enjoys nothing more than listening to entries in the catalogue recited by Maxime himself.¹ Their game with the photo album, as well, usually degerates into dirty stories about the women. They use the photographs to examine the women one by one²; and although there are also pictures of men in the album, Renée "s'arrêtait aux portraits de filles plus longuement ... " (144). The most pleasure they derive from this photograph game is when they discuss which of the people in the album would make the best bed partners. "Quant à Maxime, soit hasard, soit malice de Renée qui ouvrait l'album, il tombait toujours sur la marquise. Mais on ne riait jamais autant que lorsque le sort accouplait deux hommes ou deux femmes ensemble" (145).

As if that weren't amusement enough, they discuss which ones of the people in the photographs would be their own favorite in bed. Whenever Maxime chooses anyone else, Renée always says "Moi, ... je choisirais Adeline" (144).³ If Maxime insists on anyone else, she says "D'ailleurs, tu as le goût perverti, c'est connu ... " (144).

¹See page 143 in La Curée.

²"Ils comparaient les femmes entre elles ... " (144).

³See also page 125 where Renée says, "Moi, j'aurais préféré Adeline ... elle est plus jolie." Also, something which is indicative of Maxime's sexual problems, he is very
Once she and Maxime are at a ball given by women that she doesn't know. Renée undresses all of the women with her eyes, comparing them, to their disadvantage, to Suzanne and Adeline.¹ When speaking directly of Suzanne and Adeline, she is not always kind about them, "quant à la marquise d'Espanet et à Suzanne Haffner, elles étaient inséparables, et, bien qu'elles fussent ses amies intimes, Renée ajoutait, en pinçant les lèvres, comme pour n'en pas dire davantage, qu'il courait de bien vilaines histoires sur leur compte ..." (128); but she always ends by softening her attitude because they, and others, are certainly beautiful.² We get the idea that Renée is quite jealous of them and their happiness. She feels far apart from her friends, would like very much to be like them.

Elle causait volontiers, à demi-voix, avec des rires, des cas extraordinaires de la tendre amitié de Suzanne Haffner et d'Adeline d'Espanet ... mais elle regardait encore ces choses de loin, avec la vague idée d'y goûter peut-être ... (138-139)

She says she is tired of living her life as a woman, adored by men, and would rather live as some others do, "une

taken with one of the lesbians, only his preference is Suzanne. He is convinced that Suzanne would be interested in him if only it weren't for the watchful eye of Adeline. "Moi, j'ai toujours cru que la grosse Suzanne se serait parfaitement laissé faire, si la marquise ne l'avait surveillée avec des yeux furibonds." (196)

¹See p. 161 in La Curée. ²Ibid. p. 128.
de ces dames qui vivent en garçon" (47).

In the end, she realizes that perhaps she should have followed her desires in this direction. After the men in her life have stripped her monetarily, psychologically and physically, she perceives that, because she has not been like these women, she has been going against her nature:

Mme d'Espanet, devant l'orchestre, avait réussi à saisir Mme Haffner au passage, et valsaient avec elle, sans vouloir la lâcher....
Renée compri alors ce tourbillonnement des jupes, ce piétinement des jambes. Elle était placée en contrefas... (293)

We cannot but believe, from this evidence, that the object of Renée's quest should have been different from what she thought it was. Had she fully realized that the unnameable desire she felt was for a homosexual relationship instead of for an incestuous one, the men could never have "stripped" her and left her with such shame.

Since, however she took the other road -- that of incestuous love (one cannot really say heterosexual, since Maxime is so feminine) -- we must regard it as the same journey that other heroes take toward their goal.

This journey, we recall, is fraught with tests and trials--the paralyzing boredom and the meeting with the Prince are but two of the examples thereof. It would be erroneous to believe, because she refuses help and would travel the road alone, that she does not meet with the same
obstacles as other heroes have done. Her story abounds in
them.

The trials she meets come under two categories:
(1) trials concerning money, and (2) trials concerning love.
The money trials begin with her marriage to Saccard. As
we discussed above, he is the person that introduces her to
luxury and creates in her the need to spend money outrageously.
This spending and the debts she incurs thereby, are re-
peatedly sources of tremendous problems. The problems and
the debts become so large that she begins, against her will,
selling off large portions of the property given to her by
her aunt as protections against future obstacles. She does
not want to do it,\(^1\) but she knows that signing away her se-
curity is the only way to feed her habit of spending. She
thus continually falls into the hands of her clever and ruth-
less husband, who, of course, is the one who will end up with
all of her property: she signs all his notes.

"Quatre-vingt mille francs! s'écria-t-elle,
mais c'est un vol! ... Est-ce que vous me con-
seillez une pareille folie?
--Non, dit-il nettement. Mais si vous avez abso-
lument besoin d'argent, je ne vous la défends pas."
Il se leva comme pour se retirer. Renée, dans
une indécision cruelle, regarda son mari et le mé-
moire qu'il laissait sur la cheminée. Elle finit

\(^1\)"Jamais, sa femme ne voulut aliéner les biens de la
tante Elisabeth; elle avait juré à cette dernière de les
garder intacts pour les léguer à son enfant, si elle deve-
nait mère." (182)
par prendre sa pauvre tête entre ses mains, en
murmurant:
"Oh! ces affaires! J'ai la tête brisée, ce
matin ... Allez, je vais signer ce billet de qua-
tre-vingt mille francs. Si je ne faisais pas, ça
me rendrait tout à fait malade. Je me connais,
je passerai la journée dans un combat affreux ...
J'aime mieux faire les bêtises tout de suite. Ça
me soulage." (184-185)

The above scene occurs repeatedly until finally there is not
much left for her to sell. Later, her debts are even more
immense.

Des embarras terribles attendaient Renée et
Maxime à Paris. Plusieurs des billets souscrits
à Larsonneau étaient échus; mais, comme Saccard
les laissait naturellement dormir chez l'huissier,
ces billets inquiétaient peu la jeune femme. El-
le se trouvait bien autrement effrayée par sa dette
chez Worms qui montait maintenant à près de deux
cent mille francs. Le tailleur exigeait un acompte,
en menaçant de suspendre tout crédit. Elle avait
de brusques frissons, quand elle songeait au scan-
dale d'un procès, et surtout à une fâcherie avec
l'illustre couturier .... cette belle existence de
gouters, de caprices satisfaits, de plaisirs faci-
les, allait cesser! Mais une crainte plus grave
encore vint les consterner ... Saccard déclara net-
tement qu'il ne pouvait rien. Son fils à Clichy
le poserait ... Renée était au désespoir; elle
voyait son cher enfant en prison, mais dans un vé-
ritable cachot, couché sur de la paille humide ...
elle jura qu'elle trouverait l'argent ... (213-
214)

Saccard offers to arrange for the sale of her last
bit of property, but she hesitates, trying to find some
other way. Perhaps, she thinks, she could ask her father
for money, then, that she could sell her jewelry; when
these ideas don't work, she decides she could sell herself.

It is at this point that she goes to see Mme Sidonie and
almost succumbs to her and to M. de Saffré, but pride again steps in and prevents her from making this step which might save her. "Une immense fierté lui remontait au coeur," (221) and she returns to her husband to arrange with him to sell the last lot, not knowing that it will be Saccard himself who will buy it. Although there is a slight hitch in the plan—in that Maxime relates to Renée the scheme to get her property—Renée ends by losing to Saccard through the machinations of her sister-in-law, the offended guardian. 

The trials concerning her early lovers have already been discussed in a previous section. Her most serious affair is, of course, the one she has had with Maxime, who, in his role of the "Prince Charming", enters the picture as the male (or nearly male) counterpart of the Temptress, the last test of the talents of the hero(ine). Like the female Temptress, the Tempter unites both the good and the bad for Renée: he represents love, relief from boredom, and constant attention; but he also represents debts, worries and problems. "Le cher enfant était à sec, depuis qu'il fouil-

1 She realizes almost immediately her mistake, but by then it is too late. "Si jusque-là la pensée de son mari était passée parfois dans l'inceste, comme une pointe d'honneur voluptueuse, le mari, l'homme lui-même, y entra dès lors avec une brutalité qui tourna ses sensations les plus délicates en douleurs intolérables. ... elle roulait à la débauche vulgaire, au partage de deux hommes. Vaïnement elle tenta de jouir de l'infamie. " (222) See supra, pp. 95-98.

2 See supra, pp. 49-50. 3 Ibid., p. 123.
lait vainement les tiroirs de son père. Sa fidélité, sa sagesse exemplaire, pendant sept à huit mois, tenaient beaucoupx au vide absolu de sa bourse" (214). Elsewhere we read that Renée is happy with Maxime, all she needs is money to be perfectly content.

Cet hiver fut pour Renée une longue joie. Elle ne souffrait que du besoin d'argent. Maxime lui coûtait très cher; il la traitait toujours en belle-maman, la laissait payer partout. Mais cette misère cachée était pour elle une volupté de plus. ... et quand elle avait décidé son mari à lui trouver quelques milliers de francs, elle les mangeait avec son amant, en folies coûteuses, comme deux écoliers lâchés dans leur première esca-pade. (208)

Maxime represents more in his "bad" manifestations than a mere spender of his mother's money, however. He represents the evil and heinous crime of incest which, although the affair was entirely Renée's doing (thereby representing one of her victories along the road of trials) and the source of untold joy to her, never fails to make her miserable -- for Renée has always been at heart a good, honest bourgeoise with honest sentiment. The temptation she feels, like Phèdre, to commit incest with her husband's son is anathema to that deeply imbedded instinct.

De tête, elle était bourgeoise; elle avait une honnêteté absolue, un amour des choses logiques, une crainte du ciel et de l'enfer, une dose énorme de préjugés; elle appartenait à son père, à cette race calme et prudente où fleurissent les vertus du foyer. (138)

Yet, having been rejected at home and raised among
similarly disturbed adolescents, she is also tempted by this sin and by Maxime. Perhaps the place where this duality of feeling is best expressed is in the following passage:

A cette heure, elle voulut le mal, le mal que personne ne commet, le mal qui allait emplir son existence vide et la mettre enfin dans cet enfer, dont elle avait toujours peur, comme au temps où elle était petite fille. Puis, le lendemain, elle ne voulut plus, par un étrange sentiment de remords et de lassitude. Il lui semblait qu'elle avait déjà péché, que ce n'était pas si bon qu'elle pensait, et que ce serait vraiment trop sale. La crise devait être fatale, venir d'elle-même, en dehors de ces deux êtres, de ces camarades qui étaient destinés à se tromper un beau soir, à s'accoupler, en croyant se donner une poignée de main. Mais, après cette chute bête, elle se remit à son rêve d'un plaisir sans nom, et alors elle reprit Maxime dans ses bras, curieuse de lui, curieuse des joies cruelles d'un amour qu'elle regardait comme un crime. Sa volonté accepta l'inceste, l'exigea, entendit le goûter jusqu'au bout, jusqu'aux remords, s'ils venaient jamais. Elle fut active, consciente. Elle aimait avec son emportement de grande mondaine, ses préjugés inquiets de bourgeois, tous ses combats, ses joies et ses dégoûts de femme qui se noie dans son propre mépris. (198)

The figure of the Temptress or (as here) the Tempter is known throughout mythology to come forth in many different guises and to represent many different things to the hero, as Maxime does for Renée. "As [the hero] progresses in the slow initiation which is life, the form of the goddess undergoes for him a series of transfigurations: she can never be greater than himself, though she can always promise more than he is yet capable of comprehending. She lures, she guides, she bids him burst his fet-

Now, Maxime guides Renée, bids her "burst her fetters" of lassitude and with his help, she accomplishes this break from boredom and continues along the way of the quest, desiring to possess the boon, Maxime, who as the tempter is not only the "guide to the sublime acme of sensuous adventure"\(^2\), he is that acme. The problem with their affair, however, and its effect on her quest, is that Renée still thinks that she can take over. Campbell tells us that this is not to be done. "The hero who can take her [the temptress; i.e. Maxime] as she is, without undue commotion but with the kindness and assurance she requires, is potentially the king, the incarnate god, of her created world."\(^3\)

Now Renée seems to be the god(dess) of Maxime's world for awhile, but after her inordinate pride becomes a factor and she ceases to be kind and calm, the Tempter, as another guiding agent of destiny, is transformed into a menace. Again at this point Renée decides that, instead of letting destiny (and its agents) take its course and help her toward the fulfillment of her quest, she will go against destiny, against nature. Instead of letting him marry and become an adult as he is supposed to do, she loses her wit, becomes agitated and upset. Maxime knows that, in order to fulfill

\(^1\)Campbell, *Hero*, p. 116.  \(^2\)Ibid.  
\(^3\)Ibid.
his destiny, he must get rid of her.¹ Maxime then decides that he will use any means possible to get rid of "cette maîtresse gênante" (229), but Renée sees things differently. Instead of letting Maxime fulfill his destiny, and perhaps hers as well, Renée decides to hold on to her boon—not to bring it back to society as she must. She will keep him, no matter what the cost: "Je vais t'enfermer ici, dit-elle... Je m'en moque du scandale!" (284).²

"The crux of the curious difficulty lies in the fact that our conscious views of what life ought to be seldom correspond to what life really is."³ This is especially true of Renée: she refuses to admit to what she has done and the effects of her desire to keep Maxime locked away -- her only concern is her own pride. How could a proud and wondrous woman, a self-admitted "goddess" of Paris, allow her lover to marry someone else in full view of the world?

This is where destiny (in the form of the would-be guardian) comes to chastise Renée for her failure to "play the game", for her detour on the road of trials, for her refusal to return to society:

When the hero-quest has been accomplished... through the grace of some male or female, ... the adventurer still must return with his life-

¹See p. 229, also supra pp. 73-76.
²See supra pp. 79-80. ³Campbell, Hero, p. 121.
transmuting trophy. The full round, the norm of the monomyth, requires that the hero shall now begin the labor of bringing the runes of wisdom, the Golden Fleece, or his sleeping princess, back into the kingdom of humanity ... But the responsibility has been frequently refused.¹

Renée's refusal is analogous to that of the Hindu god Muchukunda², who thought the land of miracles so beautiful, and society so evil and its lack of understanding so great, that he decided to retreat one degree farther from it. Our heroine, in deciding to take her boon away from society and sequester it in America, is going very much against everything that the gods have designed for them both. So the world, in the form of the father (via the guardian), must come and get them.³

Although "the bliss of the deep abode is not lightly abandoned in favor of the self-scattering of the wakened state ... society is jealous of those who remain away from it, and will come knocking at the door."⁴ Saccard doesn't even bother to knock.

Elle riait, elle l'attirait à elle, le baisant sur les lèvres, lorsqu'un bruit leur fit

¹Campbell, Hero, p. 193.

²Vishnu Purana, 23; Bhagavata Purana 10:51, Harivansha, 114. Also see Campbell, Hero, pp. 194-196 for a complete rendering of this Hindu myth.

³See supra, pp. 80-81. ⁴Campbell, Hero, p. 207.
tourner la tête. Saccard était debout sur le seuil de la porte.

Un silence terrible se fit. Lentement, Renée détacha ses bras du cou de Maxime; et elle ne baissa pas le front... tandis que le jeune homme, écrasé, terrifié, chancelait, la tête basse, maintenant qu'il n'était plus soutenu par son étreinte... ²

Et s'adressant à Maxime, qui avait relevé la tête, surpris de la voix apaisée de son père:

"Allons, viens, toi! reprit-il. Je t'avais vu monter, je te cherchais...

Les deux hommes descendirent, causant ensemble. (284-285)

Renée, her pride preventing her from admitting her mistake, does not publicly repent her crime, does not re-cross the threshold with the father and so she must remain behind in utter defeat, stripped of her boon.

The father here is in the role again of initiating priest, trying, in his own way, to teach Renée that the order of nature must not be challenged. Now this final stage of initiation is always harsh, cruel, ego-shattering. "It is in this ordeal that the hero may derive hope and assurance from the helpful female [or, as here, male] figure, by whose magic (pollen charms or powers of intercession) he is protected through all the frightening experiences of the father's... initiation." ³ Renée, having no mother figure and not trusting this father figure, has needed to de-

¹Pride remains her problem, even after this horrendous blow.

²Note that Maxime's pride does not stand in his way.

³Campbell, Hero, p. 130-131.
rive help and sustenance from some other source. Her blunder is that her faith is only in herself and not in the prince she has come to "love", nor in the guardian, to whom she has never submitted. The father's pitiless initiation therefore becomes fatal to our heroine; she dies, not to be reborn.

As discussed above,¹ the hero usually reaches a point where life and sexuality as a symbol of life become repugnant to him or her. It suddenly dawns on our hero that everything she has thought or done in the past twenty-odd years (since she was sent away to convent school) was "tainted with the odor of the flesh."² The acts of her life, the organs of life and sexuality, have become intolerable to her "honnête bourgeoise" soul.

Renée resta seule...
Elle s'aperçut dans la haute glace de l'armoire. Elle s'approcha, étonnée de se voir, oubliant son mari, oubliant Maxime, toute préoccupée par l'étrange femme qu'elle avait devant elle. La folie montait. Ses cheveux jaunes, relevés sur les tempes et sur la nuque, lui parurent une nudité, une obscénité. ... elle avait honte d'elle, et un mépris de sa chair l'emplissait d'une colère sourde contre ceux qui la laissaient ainsi, avec de simples cercles d'or aux chevilles et aux poignets pour lui cacher la peau. ...
Sa vie se déroulait devant elle. Elle assistait à son long effarement, à ce tapage de l'or et de la chair qui était monté en elle, dont elle avait eu jusqu'aux genoux, jusqu'au ventre, puis jusqu'aux lèvres, et dont elle sentait main-

¹See supra. pp. 72-73, and Campbell, Hero, p. 122.

²Ibid.
But the revulsion comes too late to save her.

She realizes that it is too late for her to press beyond this point of revulsion and return to society, bringing along the boon of love, as other heroes have done. She proudly hangs on to her personal womb (her pride), and remains behind while the world goes on.

Herbert Weisinger tells us how a mythic hero becomes
a tragic figure:

...the tragic protagonist confronted by two equal and opposite forces and fully aware of the consequences of his choice can bring off the victory, and then only at the expense of pain and suffering. ... But suffering can be made bearable only when at the same time it is made part of a rational world order into which it fits and which has an understandable place for it.

Renée's problem is that she chooses love (or her idea of love) over social order and that cannot be. "Tragedy ... occurs when the accepted order of things is fundamentally questioned only to be the more triumphantly reaffirmed." Renée questions the social order in defying tradition, in defying her marital status, in defying the social taboo against incest, and in defying her own guardian. She recognizes her sin too late and regrets it: "Elle pleurait de ne pas avoir écouté les grandes voix des arbres" (289).

Through her death, the social order is reaffirmed. Her death, the "symbolic sacrifice of one who is like us, can make possible our atonement for the evil which is within us and for the sins which we are capable of committing." And so she stands, stripped of all the symbols of her hubris -- her clothes, her beauty, her men, even her

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2 Ibid. 3 Ibid.
chambermaid—lost to the world: a tragic "hero" who, through her loss, brings back home to us the knowledge she has gleaned from her quest: One cannot be successful in the Quest-adventure, having challenged Nature (her own and that of the world) and nature's agents, as seen in the Monomyth.
The objective of the myth is to teach the readers, or listeners as the case may be, about life and the order of things.

The myth of Saccard is a quest for riches for which Saccard fought all his life, single-mindedly without detouring from his path. In the end, we learn that by playing according to the rules, if not according to modern ethics, and by going whole-heartedly after his quest, any man can become a hero within his society.

Maxime, who would rather spend money than make it, also succeeds in his quest by marrying a woman wealthy enough to provide for his spending habits for quite some time. His story also teaches us something: if a boy is properly initiated, he can easily grow up to be accepted by society and can accomplish his goals in life.

As for Renée, it is her lack of humility, her sin of hubris, her refusal to leave the "belly of the whale" (the womb), and finally her refusal to return to the natural order of things after her adventure is complete—in short her refusal to play by the rules—that eventually cause her downfall. But if we know this, if we learn from her tragedy about the order of things, the design of the myth has been fulfilled—the meaning of life has been revealed.
PART TWO

THE FORM OF THE MYTH:

THE CIRCLE
CHAPTER FOUR

THE CIRCLE OF LIFE: DEATH/REBIRTH

The circle has always been one of the most powerful of symbols. It stands for life, order, harmony in the universe. It is the sign of "adequate limitation, of the manifest world, of the precise and the regular, as well as of the ... unity of all matter and all universal harmony."\(^1\) Anything enclosed within the circumference of the circle is defined and orderly. The things without the circle are tantamount to chaos, the disintegration of the soul.

In primitive mythic pedagogy, it is taught that the entire universe is a circle. The priest of a Pawnee Indian tribe, during the ceremonial of the Hako, draws a circle with his toe and says "If you go on a high hill and look around, you will see the sky touching the earth on every side, and within this circular enclosure the people live."\(^2\)

These primitive peoples also believe that the waters surround the earth in a circle and that within that circle

\(^1\)Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, p. 46.

order is made out of chaos.¹

In the center of the world circle stand tall trees or mountains representing the axis of the wheel, joining the circle of the earth with the circle of the sky, the human world with the divine. This axis is the world navel, the entry point of life-giving energy pouring down from heaven into the world circle.

The axis of the world can also be a man or a woman, symbolized by the hero, for

the hero as the incarnation of God is himself the navel of the world, the umbilical point through which the energies of eternity break into time. Thus the World Navel is the symbol of the continuous creation: the mystery of the maintenance of the world through that continuous miracle of vivification which wells within all things.²

Within the great circle of the world, primitive peoples also believe they must live within circular dwellings: teepees, mudhuts and the tents of nomads are usually built in the form of a circle, and usually arranged in a circle

¹"'If it is my day to die', [said an old Cheyenne chieftain], 'I want to do it here, [within this teepee], within a circle.' ... I got the eloquence of desperation. 'The river is part of the great circle of the waters of the earth ... The sacred waters flow through the body of the earth as the blood runs within a man and the sap within a tree. All things are joined in this great current ..." Thomas Berger, "My Education as a Human Being", Little Big Man, a fictionalized history of the Cheyenne nation (Greenwich, Connecticut" Fawcett Publications, 1964), pp. 258-259. This perspective is explained on a more generalized scale in Frye, Anatomy of Criticism, pp. 145-146.

²Campbell, Hero, p. 41.
around a central campfire, or temple. These circles represent the circular nest, again symbolic of the order of the world. The Pawnee priest instructs:

The circle represents a nest ... and it is drawn with the toe because the eagle builds the nest with his claws. ... So the circles we have made are not only nests, but they also represent the circle Tirawa-atius has made for the dwelling place of all the people. The circles also stand for the kinship group, the clan, and the tribe."

The hub of this domestic wheel is the hearth in the home or teepee, the altar in the temple, or the campfire in the center of the village or encampment. The fire in the center is symbolic of the fire of life within the womb of the Universal Mother. The opening in the top of the teepee, the chimney over the hearth (or the pinnacle of a dome) is the hub, the door through which the smoke of sacrificial offerings, "burned in the fire of life, ... [is] lifted on the axis of ascending smoke from the hub of the earthly to that of the celestial wheel."

The heavens are also circular: the skies meet the earth on all sides, and the heavenly bodies—the moon and the stars—are round. They are circular symbols as well.

It is through the moon's phases—that is, its birth, death, and resurrection—that men came to know at once their own mode of being in the cos-

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1Alice C. Fletcher, quoted in Campbell, Hero, pp. 41-42.

2Campbell, Hero, p. 42.
mos and the chances for their survival or rebirth. It is through lunar symbolism that religious man was led to compare vast masses of apparently unrelated facts and finally to integrate them in a single system. ... It was lunar symbolism that enabled man to relate and connect such heterogeneous things as: birth, becoming, death and resurrection; the waters, plants, woman, fecundity, and immortality ... most of the ideas of cycle, ... of reconciliation of contraries, of coincidentia oppositorum."¹

The moon is a circle: it represents the emerging order of light out of the chaos of night, and represents the circular cycle of life.

Similarly the sun, the mighty ball circle whose light, movement and shape symbolize the force which brings life, "activates and animates all the forces involved in any given process ... "² The solar ray, the sunbeam, is also the symbol of the axis mundi, linking heavenly with earthly circles and driving those two wheels. It is the sun door whereby the divine energy flows from the one to the other, igniting the hearth of the world womb.

Life itself is a circle, for the circle "embraces all cyclic systems ..."³ In myth, the cosmic order con-


²Cirlot, Dictionary of Symbols, p. 46.

³Ibid.
tinues because there is a continual circular flow of energy between the two worlds. The cosmogonic cycle repeats itself continually and forever. The Aztecs believed that the life of the world is an everlasting round of life, death and rebirth, and that each of the periods of the world will be terminated by a cyclic reappearance of each of the four elements: air, earth, fire and water.

The Jains conceive of time similarly. It is a wheel with twelve spokes representing twelve ages which eventually ends in cataclysm of one of the four elements; there is a period of rest, and then the world begins anew.¹

These ideas are not merely primitive ones, however. Scientists even today speak of the cycles of life. It is well-known that everything, from time to earth, to plants, to animals, to humans, has a special cycle. A season dies and another is born until eventually, the first returns. A man dies, a child is born. Within a single lifetime, there is also a complete cycle: man begins as a little child, goes through adolescence, young adulthood, middle age, and finally, in senility, he enters what is commonly known as his second childhood.

All duration will progress in a circle, or in accordance with an indefinite succession of cycles.

¹See Campbell, Hero, the chapter entitled the "Universal Round", pp. 261-269.
... the same situations are reproduced that have already been produced in previous cycles and will be reproduced in subsequent cycles--ad infinitum. No event is unique, occurs once and for all ... but it has occurred, occurs, and will occur, perpetually; the same individuals have appeared, appear and will reappear at every return of the cycle upon itself. Cosmic duration is repetition and a-nakuklosis, eternal return.¹

Repetition is life circling in upon itself, constantly returning to its starting point and beginning again, re-entering the cycle of life for another round.

We have already seen what in primitive rituals is a celebration of life renewing itself and in myth and literature is symbolic of the eternal round of life-death-rebirth; it is known in both contexts as initiation.

Initiation includes the imparting of knowledge with which the novice is unfamiliar: the sacred, death and sexuality. The initiate understands these things and "assumes them, and incorporates them into his new personality. We must add that, if the novice dies to his infantile, profane, nonregenerate life to be reborn to a new ... existence, he is also reborn to a mode of being that makes learning, knowledge, possible."² St. Paul said it centuries ago: "When

¹Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, p. 110.

²Ibid. p. 188. The French word for knowledge underscores this passage from one plane to another, this rebirth into a sphere of knowledge from one of ignorance: connaissance = co-naisance.
I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly, but then face to face: now I know in part; but then I shall know even as I am known.  

1 In life, in myth (which is a symbolic imitation of life), in initiation, no man can reach a higher plane, can become a knowing creature without ceasing to exist. As St Thomas Aquinas said, "The name of being wise is reserved to him alone whose consideration is about the end of the universe, which end is also the beginning of the universe."  

2 This is the basis of all mythology—the circle of beginning = end / end = beginning; life → death → life.  

Now, the structure of our myth illustrates the cyclical structure of life: the end = the beginning; the beginning = the end. La Curée opens with a late afternoon ride through the park beside the lake; the last chapter includes a late afternoon ride through the park beside the lake. In the opening scene we attend a parade of characters and are introduced to them; in the last park scene

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1 The Holy Bible, I Corinthians, 13: 11-12.

2 St Thomas Aquinas, Summa contra Gentiles, I, i. Quoted in Campbell, Hero, p. 269.
the same characters drive by and Renée reflects on their lives and destinies.\textsuperscript{1} In the first scene we find that Renée is bored "to death"; in the last chapter we also see her as symbolically and psychologically dead.\textsuperscript{2} In both the beginning and in the end, she leaves the park to go home: in the first chapter it is to Saccard's sumptuous mansion; in the last, it is to her father's cold and forbidding house.\textsuperscript{3} The first chapter ends with her coming alive; the last ends with her physical death.\textsuperscript{4} The structure of the novel therefore seems to say, along with Aquinas, that life = death = life.

The myth's structure is circular, but it does not end on exactly the same place as the one on which it began: in myth there is progress: "It has always been the prime function of mythology and rite to supply the symbols that carry the human spirit forward, in counteraction to those other constant human fantasies that tend to tie it back\textsuperscript{5}; but even the progress is circular and cyclical, a constant reminder of the naturalness of the cycle of life.

\textsuperscript{1}See descriptions in \textit{La Curée}, p. 40, p. 308.

\textsuperscript{2}See pp. 43, 46, 48; p. 309, \textit{La Curée}.

\textsuperscript{3}\textit{Ibid.} pp. 50-53; pp. 311 - 313.

\textsuperscript{4}\textit{Ibid.} pp. 75-76; p. 313.

\textsuperscript{5}Campbell, \textit{Hero}, p. 11.
Life is a full circle from the "tomb of the womb to
the womb of the tomb"\(^1\); the Monomyth is likewise a continual round of birth-death-rebirth, not merely in structure, but in substance as well. The hero dies to his early childhood world and is reborn into the journey of the quest; he dies and is reborn many times along the way with each trial and each victory; at the end of the journey, the hero dies to the road of trials, and, with the boon in his possession, is born into the world of miracles; he finally dies to the underworld and returns, as another, to his society.

Initiation is the ritual celebration and recreation of this myth. It, too, is conceived as a series of deaths and rebirths.\(^2\)

...on ne peut pas modifier un état sans l'abolir au préalable; en l'occurrence, sans que l'enfant meure à l'enfance. On ne saurait trop souligner l'importance de cette obsession du "commencement", en somme l'obsession du commencement absolu: la cosmogonie ... La mort initiatique est indispensable au "commencement" de la vie spirituelle. Sa fonction doit être comprise par rapport à ce qu'elle prepare: la naissance à un mode d'être supérieur.

\(^1\)Ibid., p. 12.

... la mort initiatique est souvent symbolisée par les ténèbres, par la Nuit cosmique, par la matrice tellurique, la cabane, le ventre d'un monstre, etc. Toutes ces images expriment plutôt la régression à un état pré-formel, à une modalité latente (complémentaire du "chaos" pré-cosmogonique), que l'anéantissement total (au sens où, par exemple, un membre des sociétés modernes conçoit la mort). Ces images et symboles de la mort rituelle sont solides de la germination, de l'embryologie: ils indiquent déjà qu'une nouvelle vie est en train de se préparer.  

We see then, that initiation is one of the ritual celebrations of what is already an indelible part of all earthly existence. In La Curée, the stories of the three heroes, whether initiates or not, are replete with the births and deaths and rebirths of mythology and the various rituals (including, of course, initiation).

As can be seen in the tables below, however, there is an anomaly in the three stories. The male heroes are characterized by a series of deaths and rebirths, and both of them are initiated successfully. Renée's story is characterized by births and deaths, and unsuccessful initiation. This difference can be explained easily if we consider (as most critics dealing with initiation fail to do) that there is, or should be, an inherent difference between male and female initiation rites. In both, there are the three distinguishing sections--removal from family and especially the mother, initiatory tests, and return to society (i.e. death

1Eliade, Naissances mystiques, p. 16.
rebirth); but in male initiation, the second section itself emphasizes death, while in female initiation the emphasis is on sexuality and, importantly, fertility.¹

Renée's attempted initiation is for the main part a male initiation, with no instruction in fertility or sexuality. When there is some evidence of fertility during Renée's story, that evidence is aborted early on—rejected immediately by the novice. "Elle s'était tellement serrée pour dissimuler sa grossesse, ... [qu'elle] fit fausse couche ... la mère ne voulut pas même voir [le foetus]." (103). Her later sexuality is equally sterile, emphasizing not regeneration but infertile hedonism. This rejection of one aspect of female initiation, along with her expressed regret at not having received the required female initiatory instruction,² would indicate that her female initiation attempt has failed.

Her trials along the way lean more towards male initiation trials (she is frequently referred to as male)³ with stress rather on descent into darkness (recessus ad uterum)

This excellent paper, which Dr Brady-Papadopoulou was kind enough to lend to me, will be published shortly in the Proceedings of the Pisa conference.

²See supra. p. 122. ³See supra. p. 69.
and symbolic death than on fertility.

Even this fails, however, primarily because a woman cannot be initiated as a man no matter what her preferences; and also because all initiation entails submission to an authority figure\(^1\), the initator. Renée never submits to anyone: she forces Maxime to submit to her; she constantly refuses submission to Mme Sidonie (as seen in Part I, chapter 2); and in refusing to bend to Saccard's will, she eventually breaks under it, and dies. The overwhelming failure of any sort of initiation in Renée's story accounts for her failure to be reborn at the end of her period of trials.

However that may be, in every life, whether initiation is successful or not, there still exists a succession of deaths and rebirths. This is true of Maxime and of Saccard, it is true also of Renée.

\(^1\) V. Brady-Papadopoulou, *op. cit.*
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEATH</th>
<th>REBIRTH</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Saccard:</strong></td>
<td><strong>is born to life in Paris</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dies to provincial life</td>
<td>(77, 79, 80, 81, 82, 86)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(pp. 77, 81)</td>
<td><strong>is born to possibility of riches through death of Angèle</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>dies to family (Angèle, Clothilde)</td>
<td>(93, 95, 96, 107)</td>
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<tr>
<td>(92-96)</td>
<td><strong>has many little successes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>small setbacks on the road to riches</td>
<td>(96, 99, 132, 135)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(133, 136, 178, 179)</td>
<td><strong>is reborn to family (Maxime) and society, regains riches through</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>slowly dies to family ties, no longer sleeps with Renée, continual</td>
<td><strong>symbolic death of Renée</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>financial losses ensue</td>
<td>(295-301)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEATH</td>
<td>REBIRTH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maxime:</td>
<td>rejoins family, is born to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leaves home, school</td>
<td>Paris society (121-127)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(121, 125)</td>
<td>begins instruction in Paris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>forgets his old school</td>
<td>(126), begins learning Parisian society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(126)</td>
<td>(126-132)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dies to society, remains closeted with Renée</td>
<td>is reborn into society upon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(174-175, 195, 196, 198, 199, 201, 209, 210)</td>
<td>leaving Renée</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(231-233)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is symbolically killed again</td>
<td>is reborn definitively into</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>when Renée takes him and locks him away</td>
<td>society through the symbolic death of Renée</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(244-245, 282-284)</td>
<td>(289, 303, 309)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### TABLE THREE

#### RENEE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BIRTH</th>
<th>DEATH</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Renée</td>
<td>dies to it in the convent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is born to bourgeois life (138, 154)</td>
<td>(138, 197)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is reborn to bourgeois life in pregnancy (93, 97)</td>
<td>dies to it in marrying Saccard (98, 108)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is born to luxury (45, 55, 108, 199)</td>
<td>emotional, religious death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>occurs with loss of shame,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>onset of boredom (44, 47, 48, 54, 131, 138, 139, 157, 176)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Accompanying the cyclical ritual of rebirth (initiation) are many sub-rituals of death which must be accomplished prior to definitive rebirth. Among these, for males, is circumcision and/or subincision. There are many different explanations for this ritual, among them are: (1) that a boy must be cleansed of his mother's blood (on which he was nourished as a foetus)\(^1\); or (2) that the boys are imitating the female menses of which they are jealous.\(^2\) Whatever the explanation, all agree that the ritual (which has been known to range all the way from total castration to relatively small and painless scarifications or the mere knocking out of a tooth) is symbolic of the death of the hero to one state and rebirth into another.

Bettleheim says that these rituals "seem to satisfy, at least temporarily, those tendencies that are in opposition to the sexual role the person is supposed to assume once and for all when the ceremonies end."\(^3\) Campbell explains that the rituals, making man as much like woman as possible, symbolize the joining of the two, the acquiring of the penis womb representing the hero's becoming, "by virtue of the ceremonial, more than man."\(^4\)

\(^1\)Eliade, Naissances mystiques, p. 66.

\(^2\)Bettleheim, Symbolic Wounds, pp. 104-114.

\(^3\)Ibid. p. 107.  

\(^4\)Campbell, Hero, p. 154.
Throughout *La Curée* we read how intricately Maxime assumes womanhood into his own being.

Il restait ... un peu fille, avec des mains effilées, son visage imberbe, son cou blanc et potelé. Renée le consultait gravement sur ses toilettes. ... À dix-sept ans, il n'y avait pas une modiste qu'il n'eût approfondie, pas un bottier dont il n'eût étudié et pénétré le coeur. Cet étrange avorton, qui, pendant les classes d'anglais, lisait les prospectus que son parfumeur lui adressait tous les vendredis, aurait soutenu une thèse brillante sur le Tout-Paris mondain, clientèle et fournisseurs compris, à l'âge où les gamins de province n'osent pas encore regarder leur bonne en face. Souvent, quand il revenait du lycée, il rapportait dans son tilbury un chapeau, une boîte de savons, un bijou, commandé la veille par sa belle-mère. Il avait toujours quelque bout de dentelle musquée qui traînait dans ses poches. (128-129)¹

During his initiation Maxime is also very anxious about his femininity and tries to rid himself of it. He eventually succeeds (cf. *supra*, pp.71-72) and in doing so dies to the world of women and rejoins male society. So, no matter whether we take Mr Bettleheim's explanation of symbolic assumption of female characteristics (to get rid of them eventually) or Professor Campbell's explanation (to integrate them into the whole so as to become greater than man), Maxime succeeds. Through his assumption of female characteristics and habits and then growing away from them through this ritual of death/rebirth, the hero passes from one plane to another.

¹See *supra*, pp.58-59, 69, 71-72, 73, and 78 for more complete discussion of this subject.
Another of the accompanying rituals is thought to have originated after the cultivation of land became the prime source of food. The peoples noticed how the seasonal changes brought forth death to the land, and then life again. This cycle of birth-death-rebirth of the land was though to be facilitated—if not actually brought about—by the blood sacrifice of some human or animal. Human sacrifice, Frazer says, also had the effects of a symbolic, if not actual, purging of the society: "...whether the evils are conceived of as invisible or as embodied in material form, is a circumstance entirely subordinate to the main object of the ceremony, which is simply to effect a total clearance of all the ills that have been infesting a people"\(^1\); for "disease and blight [can] ... interrupt the cycle" of life.\(^2\)

The evils of the entire people are transferred into the person to be sacrificed, often a worshipped god or king,\(^3\) and he is then joyously killed. 


\(^3\)This is beautifully illustrated in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, and in the myth of Oedipus.
magical guarantee of rejuvenation, an insurance of life, both vegetable and human" ¹; thereby ensuring continuance of the circle of life.

Creation cannot take place except through the sacrifice of a living being, and Eliade tells us that this sacrifice is often a Mother-Goddess figure. ² In La Curée there are two such sacrifices which are made to ensure the success of the hero and the continuance of society as it is known. The first is the sacrifice of an innocent, the wife of one of our heroes, the mother ³ of another. Through Angèle's death, Saccard crosses the threshold into the world of treasures and starts his real journey towards attainment of the boon. The sacrifice is described in so many words by the author:

La mort entraînait lentement dans cette chambre chaude et moite ... ⁴ Mme Sidonie avait abandonné les

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³ In MDM, pp. 182-183, Eliade tells us that it is especially important that the scapegoat represent the Earth-Mother, the archetype of fecundity and rebirth. As mother of a hero, Angèle is eminently suitable for the role.

³ The womb symbolism of the room is important, for it is from the womb that one dies to one life to be born into another.
potions, laissant le mal faire son œuvre... "Ta pauvre femme ..., je crois que tout est bien fini. ... je me suis occupée de toi, pour la chose que tu sais, et je crois avoir découvert. ... C'est une jeune fille qu'on voudrait marier tout de sui-
te, dit-elle. La chère enfant a eu un malheur. Il y a une tante qui ferait un sacrifice." (92-93)

The aunt's sacrifice is not the real one here; it is rather the sacrifice of Angèle, who knows in the end that she is sacrificing herself for the benefit of the heroic quest of her husband: "elle dut excuser ce misérable, en songeant à la lutte acharnée qu'il livrait depuis si long-
temps à la fortune ... Elle pardonna au dernier soupir. Elle mourut comme elle avait vécu, mollement, s'effaçant dans la mort, après s'être effacée dans la vie " (95).

The second sacrifice is the most obvious; and, because it furthers the quests of two heroes and sends them back into society with their boons, it is most important: Renée represents a good, bourgeois society become ill.² Her disease is not physical, as was Angèle's, it is psycho-
logical and social; her need for incest goes counter to

¹Professor Wheelwright says that disease was symbol-
ic of the ills of society and must be gotten rid of (supra.
p. 165 , note 2). Angèle is diseased, therefore she is the perfect one to send off to death in order to purify the hero and his society and benefit them both.

²See supra p. 165 and 166. Zola tells us in La Curré that the affair between Renée and Maxime was "une longue perversion de tous les instants ... l'acte brutal ne fut que la crise aiguë de cette ... maladie d'amour." p. 196.
the taboos of society,\textsuperscript{1} interrupting the cycle of life. As Earth's Mother-Goddess, she must be sacrificed to allow the cycle to start up again and take its normal course (i.e. Saccard must regain his fortune, and Maxime must be allowed to grow up in order for the cycle to continue).

Through Renée's symbolic and then her actual death, Maxime is freed from the binding feminine influence and becomes man; and likewise Saccard obtains the property he needs to accomplish his quest. Renée's sacrifice takes place, as Eliade says it must, on a threshold\textsuperscript{2}—both literally (the threshold of her bedroom which is also the womb of her world) and figuratively\textsuperscript{3} (the threshold of the world womb which the men cross to be born back into society).

\textsuperscript{1}Eliade tells us that incest is among the most abhorred of all crimes against nature and the Earth. Indeed, in ancient Greece, "incest rendered the earth barren." \textit{Myths, Dreams and Mysteries}, p. 187.

\textsuperscript{2}"The threshold is the limit, the boundary, the frontier that distinguishes and opposes two worlds—and at the same time the paradoxical place where the two worlds communicate... A similar ritual function falls to the threshold of the human habitation, and it is for this reason that the threshold is an object of great importance. ... It is on the threshold that sacrifices to the guardian divinities are offered.... The threshold, the door show the solution of continuity in space immediately and concretely; hence their great religious importance, for they are symbols and at the same time vehicles of passage from one space to the other." Eliade, \textit{The Sacred and the Profane}, p. 25.

\textsuperscript{3}Saccard has always used her losses as his gains: her pregnancy is his road to riches, her spending is his way of obtaining her valuable property; her temporary loss of
...un bruit leur fit tourner la tête. Saccard était debout sur le seuil de la porte. ... Saccard, foudroyé par ce coup suprême qui faisait enfin crier en lui l'époux et le père, n'avançait pas, livide, les brûlant de loin du feu de ses regards ... Il regarda l'acte, regarda les coupables. ... Il resta droit devant cette signature, réfléchissant. ...

"Vous avez bien fait de signer, ma chère amie, dit-il doucement à sa femme."

Les deux hommes descendirent, causant ensemble. Renée resta seule, debout au milieu du cabinet de toilette, regardant le trou béant du petit escalier, dans lequel elle venait de voir disparaître les épaules du père et du fils. (284-286)

Her shame and disgust at her own nudity at this point are her metaphorical death—she has been stripped of everything, even her life.

La pièce était nue comme elle ... elle ferma les yeux, baissant le front ... elle rêvait d'arracher ces dentselles, de cracher sur cette soie, de briser son grand lit à coups de pied, de traîner son luxe dans quelque ruisseau d'où il sortirait usé et sali comme elle ... Quand elle rouvrit les yeux, elle s'approcha de la glace, se regarda encore ... Elle était finie. Elle se vit morte." (290)

Saccard goes on after sacrificing his wife to win his position and his long-sought-after wealth—"le fleuve d'or avait enfin ses sources" (301); Maxime marries money

Maxime (when Saccard comes back to take her physically) is also turned to his profit: Maxime says"'c'est fini, j'en ai plein le dos.' Elle resta écrasée. Elle le regarda traverser le jardin. ... Et quand elle fut couchée, elle éprouva tout à coup un désespoir immense, en réfléchissant qu'elle aurait dû dire à Maxime que son père, rentré avec elle, l'avait suivie dans sa chambre pour l'entretenir d'une question d'argent quelconque.

"Ce fut le lendemain que Saccard se décida à brusquer le dénouement de l'affleure de Charonne. Sa femme lui appartenait ... il fallait que Renée fut dépouillée avant que l'expropriation prochaine s'êbruitât." (232)
so he can spend it, re-enters society as a man of the world (309-310); but it is only through Renée's sacrifice that either of them succeeds.

Frazer emphasizes the fact that "this ... expulsion of devils is commonly preceded ... by a period of general license, during which the ordinary restraints of society are thrown aside ... "¹ Eliade expands on this notion in several of his monographs. He tells us that in order for life to be renewed, man must kill and be killed and that "he must assume sexuality to its extreme limit--the orgy."²

The orgy, and indeed any sexual union in the fields, among the plants and the earth, symbolizes the identification of woman with the land and hence the life cycle. The orgy is the extreme example of the imitation of the divine marriage of heaven and earth, "the hierogamy of the Fecundating God and Mother Earth."³

The fertility of vegetable life is stimulated by sexual union, especially by "unlimited genetic frenzy."⁴

...the meaning of the orgy is not difficult to understand; the orgy is a symbolic re-entry into chaos, into the primordial and undifferentiated

²Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, p. 103.
³Ibid., p. 146.
⁴Ibid., p. 147.
state. It reenacts the "confusion", the "totality" before the Creation, the cosmic Night, the cosmogonic egg.¹

The reason for entering into the realm of chaos and night again is to re-create life, to ensure the regeneration of life and thereby to continue the circle of life-death-rebirth.

The union of Maxime and Renée in the Earth of the greenhouse, among the plants, is reminiscent of this mythic ritual. The plants pro-create with them, descending into the frenzy of chaos with them, making passionate love with them—a veritable orgy of plants and human animals. An important aspect of this orgy is that it takes place in winter, ensuring the coming of life again in spring.² Renée and Maxime "eurent une nuit d'amour fou" (200). They are caught up in the immense lovemaking all around them.

...c'était une ronde d'herbes vivantes qui se poursuivait d'une tendresse inassouvie. Aux quatre angles ... leur rêve charnel s'affolait encore, et les jets souples ... étaient les bras interminables d'amoureux qu'on ne voyait pas, et qui allongeaient éperdument leur étreinte, pour amener à eux toutes les joies éparses. Ces bras sans fin pendaient de lassitude, se nouaient dans un spasme d'amour, se cherchaient, s'enroulaient, comme pour le rut d'un foule. C'était le rut immense de la serre. ... Ils entraient dans le rut de la serre. ... C'était alors au fond

¹Eliade, Myths, Dreams and Mysteries, p. 186.

²In The Golden Bough, Frazer tells us that this ceremony occurs in the winter in order to symbolize "expelling the accumulated evils of the old year before entering on a new one", p. 668.
Their descent into chaos prepares them for re-creation. The chaos leads Renée into a frightening insanity and finally death, after which sacrifice Maxime and his father are re-born into a new life. The frightening aspect of the "Earth-Mother ... is explained by the cosmic necessity of sacrifice, which alone makes possible the passage from one mode of being to another and also ensures the uninterrupted circulation of Life."^{2}

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^{1}See supra, pp. 116-117 for more details on this passage.

^{2}Eliade, Myths, Dreams and Mysteries, p. 189.
CHAPTER FIVE

THE CIRCLE OF CREATION:
CONSTRUCTION/DESTRUCTION

Perhaps the most overpowering of the symbols of passage, and therefore of rebirth, is that of fertility. Renée's early fertility is what leads her into the adventure; but with the loss of her child, she becomes sterile, never to re-create life nor to give life to anything again—except through her death. Maxime, on the other hand, shows himself fertile—literally when he gets his first lover pregnant, and symbolically when he brings Renée out of her death of boredom into the life of love. Saccard is the most prolific of the three. He is the father of two children, one of whom is a "hero", and, more importantly, he is the father of the new Paris.

This brings us to the next key ritual celebrating the circle of life, also a ritual of death and resurrection: the ritual of destruction and construction of dwelling places. Like the previous death-rebirth rituals, the destruction/death portion represents a return to darkness and chaos and is a necessary step towards cosmos and light (life).

These symbols abound in the section on the greenhouse. See pp. 200-203 in La Curée and above, chapt. 3, 4.
The sacrifice of the first dwelling-places is the fertilization for the next, just as the death of humans fertilizes the land and supports new birth and life.¹

Architectonic symbolism represents the world circle in the following way:

(1) The center of the circle of the Universe, where heaven and earth and hell meet, is the cosmic mountain, the axis mundi.

(2) "Every temple or palace—and, by extension, every sacred city or royal residence—is a Sacred Mountain, thus becoming a Center."²

In La Curée, Paris is seen as the center of the world. Thus Saccard says: "Paris est devenu la capitale du monde" (61). The world lives to try to help build the center, which is alive. "Tout le monde a voulu contribuer à la grande œuvre ... la Ville n'aurait jamais pu faire si bien ni si vite" (61).

¹"Zola's fascination with the theme of world destruction and renewal goes back long before the fin de siècle and antedates his own naturalism. His 1869 prospectus of the Rougon-Macquart series for Lacroix indicated that he would study 'des lueurs troubles du moment, des convulsions fatales de l'enfante d'un monde' (see the appendix of La Fortune des Rougon, edited by Maurice Le Blond [Paris: Bernouard, 1927-29], p. 354). This was already a major theme, however, of Zola's youthful projected epic poem 'La genèse.'" quoted in note 7, page 373 of Philip Walker's "Prophetic Myths in Zola", Myth and Literature, edited by John B. Vickery.

Earth, Hell and Heaven meet in this center: "Paris offrait ... le plus intéressant des spectacles ... La société ... faisait la grasse matinée.... L'Empire allait faire de Paris le mauvais lieu de l'Europe "(85).

Paris lives because of the deaths which occur within it: "... dans la ville où le sang de décembre était à peine lavé, grandissait, timide encore, cette folie de jouissance qui devait jeter la patrie au cabanon des nations pourries et déshonorée ..." (85), or far away: "...la guerre de Crimée venait d'être déclarée. Paris ... se jetait avec plus d'emportement dans la spéculation et les filles" (91).

Our world, where we live—in the center of the universe—is the cosmos. The cosmos must be preserved, and to ensure this continuation of life, it must be continually revitalized. We have already seen that in order to be reborn one must first die; the same is true of the cosmos and, in our story, of Paris. "Any destruction of a city is equivalent to a retrogression to chaos. Any victory over the attackers [of the city] reiterates the paradigmatic victory of the gods over the dragon (that is, over chaos)."¹ Now, this destruction of the cosmos must be repeated², in ritual

¹Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, p. 48.
²Eliade says that the ritual must be repeated yearly. See Ibid., p. 49.
and in life, and the world must recede into darkness and chaos in order that it may be created anew.

Saccard and his cronies know this, and they spend their lives destroying and creating Paris, plunging their world into chaos, then bringing back the cosmos by re-construction. Saccard speaks animatedly of the destruction of the city soon after he arrives there.

"Oui, oui, j'ai bien dit, plus d'un quartier va fondre ... Ce grand innocent de Paris! vois donc comme il est immense et comme il s'endort doucement! C'est bête, ces grandes villes! Il ne se doute guère de l'armée de pioches qui l'attaquera un de ces beaux matins, et certains hôpitaux de la rue d'Anjou ne reluiront pas si fort sous le soleil couchant, s'ils savaient qu'ils n'ont plus que trois ou quatre ans à vivre. ... On a coupé Paris en quatre ... la grande croisée de Paris ... Jeux d'enfants que cela! C'est bon pour mettre le public en appétit ... Quand le premier réseau sera fini, alors commencera la grande danse. Le second réseau trouvera la ville de toutes parts, pour rattacher les faubourgs au premier réseau. Les tronçons agoniseront dans le plâtre ... Tiens, suis un peu ma main. Du boulevard du Temple à la barrière du Trône, une entaille; puis, de ce côté, une autre entaille, de la Madeleine à la plaine Monceau; et une troisième entaille dans ce sens, une autre dans celui-ci, une entaille là, une entaille plus loin, des entailles partout, Paris haché à coups de sabre, les veines ouvertes, nourissant cent mille terrassiers et maçons, traversé par d'admirables

1 The "cross" of Paris represents the four points of the compass, the four corners of the world of which Paris is the center.

2 We have already seen that stimulating the frenzied appetite of peoples is symbolic of the chaos of death and darkness.

3 Above we saw that human death brings Paris life (see supra p. 166); now we see that Paris' death brings human life.
voies stratégiques qui mettront les forts au coeur des vieux quartiers." (105-106)

The idea of the sacrificial murder of Paris becomes an obsession with Saccard.

La nuit venait. Sa main sèche et nerveuse coupait toujours dans le vide ... [Angèle] s'im- maginait entendre, sous les ténèbres qui s'amas- saient dans les creux, de lointains craquements, comme si la main de son mari eût réellement fait des entailles dont il parlait, crevant Paris d'un bout à l'autre, brisant les poutres, écrasant les moellons, laissant derrière elle de longues et af- freuses blessures de murs croulants. La petitesse de cette main, s'acharnant sur une proie géante, finissait par inquiéter; et, tandis qu'elle dé- chirait sans effort les entrailles de l'énorme vil- le, on eût dit qu'elle prenait un étrange reflet d'acier, dans le crépuscule bleuâtre ... "Mais ce sera la folie pure, le galop infernal des mil- lions, Paris souillé et assommé!" (106)

Paris is plunged into darkness and chaos.

Il se tut de nouveau, les yeux fixés ardem- ment sur la ville, où les ombres roulaient de plus en plus épaisses ... Puis, la nuit se fit, la ville devint confuse, on l'entendit respirer lar- gement, comme une mer dont on ne voit plus que la crête pâle des vagues. (106)

The obsession becomes truth: Paris is dying—being murdered by Saccard and men like him, in order that they (i.e., Man) may live and prosper.

Paris s'abîmait alors dans un nuage de plât- re. Les temps prédits par Saccard, sur les buttes de Montmartre, étaient venus. On taillait la cité à coups de sabre, et il était de toutes les entail- les, de toutes les blessures. Il avait des décom- bres à lui aux quatre coins de la ville. (133)

Medicine men and oracles, in primitive cultures and in myth, often went high on hills or mountains for their inspiration from the gods.
The destruction of Paris creates riches for Saccard: it actually brings him to life from the depths of despair into which he had fallen while waiting for Eugene to find him a position.

Aristide Saccard avait enfin trouvé son milieu. Il s'était révélé grand spéculateur, bras-seur de millions. Après le coup de maître de la rue de la Pépinière, il se lança hardiment dans la lutte qui commençait à semer Paris d'épaves honteuses et de triomphes fulgurants. (132)

One of the biggest successes that Saccard enjoys in trying to destroy Paris is his creation of the Crédit viticole. This of course is the lending institution that ends by lending money to Paris, which is dying, not only on the exterior, but within as well -- "obérée, écrasée par la dette" (135). Saccard now has Paris by the throat: he can kill it financially any time he wishes to call in the debt, and he can destroy its buildings (through his efforts at speculation) on a whim.

No one, not even a hero, can live within chaos for very long, and thus Aristide's obsession to destroy does not last; it eventually gives way to a similar obsession to construct: to bring Paris out of its darkness and chaos and breath life into it once more.

Saccard begins his efforts at construction with a magnificent, sumptuous personal dwelling place, which he conforms into cosmos by "the symbolic installation of
an *axis mundi*..."\(^1\) The Saccard home becomes the center of the world circle because of its architectural and spatial symbolism. It is located in the parc Monceau, surrounded by tall trees communicating between heaven and earth. In the center of the house is an imposing staircase\(^2\), which begins in the center of the first floor, the midst of the balls given by the inhabitants; it therefore joins earthly society with the heavens. The dominant of the *axes mundi* of the house is, of course, the sacred temple to love—the greenhouse—filled with earth and plants, and possessing a roof open to the heavens. The most "ancient sanctuaries were hypaethral or built with an aperture in the roof—the 'eye of the dome,' symbolizing the breakthrough from plane to plane, communication with the transcendent."\(^3\)

\(^1\)Mircea Eliade explains that, through the construction of a home, all men repeat the "paradigmatic acts of the gods by virtue of which the world came to birth from the body of a marine dragon or of a primordial giant." The Sacred and the Profane, p. 52. Any dwelling place construction, therefore, is equivalent to a mythic recreation of the world. Making the home an *axis mundi*, however, makes the home the very center of the cosmos.

\(^2\)The center of the cosmic house must contain a pillar, for the sky is conceived of as a huge blue tent supported by a central pillar, the *axis mundi*. The pillar can be replaced, says Eliade, by a hole in the roof by which smoke can escape and communicate with the heavens, or by a ladder (or staircase) leading upwards toward heaven. Ibid. pp. 53-54.

\(^3\)Ibid., pp. 57-58.
The second of his constructions is the building in which the Crédit viticole is housed. This edifice is a sacred temple dedicated to the hero who performed his miracles therein, and dedicated to his quest. "Wherever a hero ... has wrought ..., the place is marked and sanctified. A temple is erected there to signify and inspire the miracle of perfect centeredness; for this is the place of the breakthrough into abundance. Someone at this point discovered eternity."¹

L'hôtel, occupé par les bureaux, avec sa cour pleine d'équipages, ses grillages sévères, son large por- ron et son escalier monumental², ses enfilades de cabinets luxueux, son monde d'employés et de laquais en livrée, semblait être le temple grave et digne de l'argent; et rien ne frappait le public d'une émotion plus religieuse, que le sanctuaire, que la Caisse, où conduisait un corridor d'une nudité sac- crée, et où l'on apercevait le coffre-fort, le dieu, accroupi, scellé au mur, trapu et dormant, avec ses trois serrures, ses flancs épais, son air de brute divine.³ (134-135)

This temple re-sanctifies the world; it is proof against worldly corruption. The temple is the sacred image of the cosmos;⁴ to create it is to bring back the cosmos out

¹Campbell, Hero, p. 43.

²This represents the axis mundi, see previous page, note 2.

³Note the imagery of the beast, described in the same terms as the sphinx in the greenhouse, pp. 200-203 in La Curée. The italics in this citation are mine.

⁴Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, p. 59.
of chaos.

The construction fever becomes a mania with Saccard.

He needs to build all sorts of temples throughout Paris; indeed, he would make of Paris one immense temple itself; but his partners prevent him, hold him back from his magnificent feats of construction.

Jamais ils ne consentirent à avoir les bureaux superbes, l'hôtel qu'il voulait bâtir pour étonner Paris. Ils refusèrent également les spéculations secondaires qui poussaient chaque matin dans sa tête: construction de salles de concert, de vastes maisons de bains, sur les terrains en bordure; chemins de fer, suivant la ligne des nouveaux boulevards; galeries vitrées, découplant le loyer des boutiques, et permettant de circuler dans Paris sans être mouillé. ... Eux continuèrent à vendre sagement leurs lots. Lui fit bâtir. ... Il était actionnaire de toutes les sociétés, bâtissait avec une sorte de fureur, se mettait de tous les trafics, menaçait d'inonder Paris comme une mer montante ... (136-137)

Saccard's construction binge comes somewhat prematurely—perhaps before Paris is quite "dead" enough, or perhaps before the gestation period has ended for the city's rebirth—and so Saccard faces problems with all the buildings he has constructed.

... lui restait avec des maisons sur les bras, dont il ne se débarrassait souvent qu'à perte. ... ses maisons ne se louaient pas; il les avait bâties trop tôt; les déblais, au milieu desquels elles se trouvaient perdues, en pleine boue, l'hiver, les isolaient, leur faisait un tort considérable. (179)

After a time (the end of the gestation period?) Saccard's construction begins bringing life to him and to the city. Renewing his ties with his wife—re-vitalizing the
physical relationship proves to be the turning point of his luck; and killing the relationship via the sacrifice of Renée finalizes the renewal of the city and the fortunes of Saccard.¹ This is not unique to La Curée. Eliade explains that construction sacrifices are necessary throughout cosmogonic mythology:

If a "construction" is to endure (be it a house, temple, tool, etc.), it must be animated, that is, it must receive life and a soul. The transfer the soul is possible only through a blood sacrifice. The history of religions, ethnology, folklore record countless forms of building sacrifices--that is, of symbolic or blood sacrifices for the benefit of a structure. In southeastern Europe, these beliefs have inspired admirable popular ballads describing the sacrifice of the wife of the master mason in order that a structure may be completed...²

Saccard and his friends consider themselves masons, artists of construction.

"MM. Mignon et Charrier en savent quelque chose, eux qui ont eu leur part de peine, et qui auront leur part de gloire."
Les maçons enrichis reçurent béatement cette phrase en pleine poitrine... "Les travaux de Paris, dit-il, on fait vivre l'ouvrier ...."³
--Et n'oubliez pas le côté artistique; les nouvelles voies sont majestueuses, ajouta M. Hupel de la Noue..." (61-62)

They recognize their part in the rebirth as well as in the

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¹"...il fallait que Renée fût dépouillée avant que l'expropriation prochaine s'ébruitât." (232)
²Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, p. 56.
³Again the theme of pain and death leading to wealth and life recurs. This concept is inescapable throughout the novel.

The thread of this compulsion continues to resurface again and again through La Curée; and in the latter pages, the mere sight of money brings it out once more: "Sacré-bleu! il y aurait là de quoi démoliir Paris et le rebâtit" (264).

The destruction and then re-creation of Paris brings good fortune to all the society. After Saccard and his colleagues begin rebuilding the city, not only Paris but the entire empire profits: "l'Empire avait déjà fait des merveilles; ce n'était pas l'or qui manquait; ... jamais la France n'avait eu une situation aussi belle devant l'Europe. ..." (265).

1 The hero and his cronies feel themselves to be above the common man. We recall that Renée felt as if she were divine and the regular rules of society did not apply to her. "Elle finissait par croire qu'elle vivait au milieu d'un monde supérieur à la morale commune, où les sens s'affinaient et se développaien, où il était permis de se mettre nue pour la joie de l'Olympe entier." (226)

2 The sight and thought of money is repeatedly a sexual experience for Saccard and his friends. In this particular passage, it is expressed metaphorically. "La har-"
The construction does not continue uninterrupted. We know that a period of construction must be followed by a period of destruction and so on and on ad infinitum: the cycle of death and rebirth reaches all levels of life. The last chapter of our story reinforces this notion: Saccard and the other members of his group decide to begin the round of destruction and construction again. Ironically, the destruction begins in spring, but it is also the spring of Saccard's fortunes.

Saccard renouvelait le coup de fortune de la rue de la Pépinière. Pour que le nom de sa femme disparût complètement, il imagina d'abord une vente des terrains et du café-concert. ...
Le chemin où ces messieurs s'engagèrent était affreux. Il avait plu toute la nuit. Le sol détrempé devenait un fleuve de boue, entre les maisons écoulées, sur cette route tracée en pleines terres molles, où les tombereaux de transports entraient jusqu'aux moyeux. Aux deux côtés, des pans de murs, crevés par la pioche, restaient debout; de hautes bâtisses éventrées, montrant leurs entrailles blafardes, ouvraient en l'air leurs cages béantes, suspendues, pareilles aux tiroirs brisés de quelque grand villain meuble. ... Ce coin de ville détruite, au sortir de la rue du Temple, leur semblait tout à fait drôle. (295-297)

They stand watching the wrecking crew at work on a wall. The destruction being realized before their very eyes thrills

1See page 49 in The Sacred and the Profane, by Mircea Eliade.
"Il remue, il remue", dit joyeusement un des industriels.
Et quand le mur céda enfin, s'abattit avec un fracas épouvantable, en soulevant un nuage de plâtre, ces messieurs se regardèrent avec des sourires. Ils étaient enchantés. Leur redingotes se couvrirent d'une poussière fine, qui leur blanchit les bras et les épaules. (297)

They are happy, not because of the destruction they cause, but because of the creation it will engender. "Allez donc, dit Saccard, ce n'est pas un mal qu'on jette ces vieilles cambuses-là par terre. On va bâtir à la place de belles maisons de pierre de taille " (298-299).

In order to get to this point in the cycle, orgies took place and women had to be sacrificed: "Vous aurez beau chercher [ dans cette maison bien connue par les orgies ...] , ces dames n'y sont plus. ... Allons à nos affaires. ..." (300), but Saccard has no regrets. The sight of the ruins fills him with joy.

Saccard semblait réjoui par cette promenade à travers des ruines. ... La réalisation de [sa] prédiction lointaine l'enchantait. Il suivait l'entaille, avec des joies secrètes d'auteur, comme s'il eût donné lui-même les premiers coups de pioche, de ses doigts de fer. Et il sautait les flaques, en songeant que trois millions l'attendaient sous des décombres. ... (299)

Under the destruction lies prosperity for him and the greenery of a renewed spring for the life of the world (besides just the city):

La voie passait au milieu de jardins, dont elle
avait abattu les murs de clôtures. Il y avait
de grands massifs de lilas en boutons. Les ver-
dures étaient d'un vert tendre très délicat.
(299)

Saccard, the hero, perpetuates the circle of life
by repeating time and again the construction and destruction
of his environment. "Le fleuve d'or avait enfin ses sources.
Mais ... il ne pouvait s'arrêter. Et, bientôt, le sol cra-
qua de nouveau sous ses pieds " (301).

The construction/destruction theme is only one mani-
festation of the theme of death and rebirth. Both sets of
actions must be repeated in order to ensure the continuation
of the circle of life—both human and non-human life. The
cycles of all entities are inextricably linked one to an-
other: the death of one person leads to the successful life
of another (Renée —— Saccard and Maxime); the death of
a people leads to the life of the city (Renée and the Cri-
mean war dead —— Paris), and the death of a city brings
life to the men of the society living therein. The mono-
myth brings home to us the structure of the universe, a
series of excentric and concentric circles turning on them-
selves, world without end.
CHAPTER SIX

THE CIRCLE OF TIME: THE PHASES OF THE CIRCLE

The cycle of life, the process which everything must follow, is one of the most important representations of the circle that we find in the Monomyth. Movement throughout the myth is circular, cyclical: the alternation of construction and destruction, success and decline, life and death, are rhythmic, cyclical movements. Everything has its own cycle: the heavenly bodies, humans, animals, and vegetation; and nowhere is this rhythmic process seen more vividly than in the perpetual circular march of time: the seasons, the times of day, the periods of life—all ever-changing, ever-repeating.

The cyclical symbols of time are divided into four principal phases: spring, summer, fall and winter; corresponding to the times of day: morning, noon, evening and night; and the periods of life: youth, maturity, old age and death. In ritual, man endeavors to imitate these time cycles, the movements of heavenly bodies "and the response

1 Northrop Frye says that to these four phases of cyclic symbols also correspond the phases of the water cycle: rains, fountains, rivers, sea or snow. See Anatomy of Criticism, p. 160.
of vegetation to them"¹ (in order to do so, people had to create an accurate calendar, based on their ritual festivals etc.); in myth, man endeavors to explain them. Myth is the "central informing power that gives archetypal significance to the ritual and archetypal narrative to the oracle."²

The cycle of time and its phases have been discussed at length by many critics, anthropologists and cultural anthropologists. Jung and Frazer have both discussed their universal significance, but Northrop Frye has explained with systematic simplicity how all of them taken together have but one pattern of meaning:

In the solar cycle of the day, the seasonal cycle of the year, and the organic cycle of human life, there is a single pattern of significance, out of which myth constructs a central narrative around a figure who is partly the sun, partly vegetative fertility and partly a god or archetypal human being.³

The dawn or spring phase, he tells us, is also the birth phase. The myths of beginning, creation or resurrection are to be found in this phase of the cycle, as is the archetype of romance. The spring/rebirth phase by necessity also entails the triumph of light over darkness and winter, and life over death. The subordinate characters are,  

¹Ibid., pp. 119-120.  
²Frye, Fables of Identity, p. 15.  
³Ibid., pp. 15-16.
logically, the father and mother. In the summer (noon) phase we have the zenith or triumph, usually of whatever was created in the spring. Here the mythic hero is wed, or enters into his Paradise. The archetypes are of comedy or idyll. The third phase is autumn or sunset and it is here that we find the death, fall or sacrifice of the hero. The characters subordinate to this stage are the traitor and the siren and its special archetype is tragedy. The last of the four phases is the winter or darkness phase. Its mythic correspondences are the triumph of the dark powers, the return of chaos and defeat. Its archetype is satire; its subordinate characters are the ogre and the witch.

The myth of La Curée follows these four cyclic phases very closely. The heroes are, as Frye has indicated, very much subject to the times of the day and the times of the year; but, interestingly, their phases are non-synchronous, differing significantly from character to character.¹

As a hero, Aristide Saccard's cycle corresponds to the four phases as closely as any man's could. He comes

¹Maxime will not be discussed separately in this chapter for the simple reason that his subordination to the other characters throughout the novel prevents him from having a distinct circle of phases of his own. His phases follow Renée's phases when he is dominated by her, and his phases follow Saccard's phases when he is dominated by him.
to Paris in the winter\(^1\), destitute and impatient. The very evening he arrives, he feels "âpre" and "amer"; he feels "une vraie prise de possession" (77-78). The next day ("au jour" [78]), he goes to see his brother in an effort to begin his adventure and is told that he is "plein d'avenir" (79), but (since it is still winter) he must wait before he can realize his future promise. The winter is for him "un temps de souffrances indicibles" (83).

The beginning of the next year marks his beginning as commissaire voyer and by spring "il devint un comédien prodigieux. Toute sa verve méridionale s'était éveillée" (84). \(^2\) For the next few months, through the summer, his talent and the knowledge he has gleaned through his job grow and he prospers. "Ce fut à cette époque qu'il devint bon enfant. Il engraisa même un peu, il cessa de courir les rues comme un chat maigre en quête d'une proie"; (86) and it is late during this summer when Saccard's plan of fortune finally comes to fruition and he tells his wife of the plan

\(^1\) He arrives "dans les premiers jours de 1852". (76) His beginning corresponds to the beginning of the year. Eliade explains in detail the significance of the new year in his chapter "The Regeneration of Time: Year, New Year, and Cosmogony," in The Myth of the Eternal Return, pp. 49-52.

\(^2\) Paris, his accomplice, follows his cycle closely. "Et, dans la ville où le sang de décembre était à peine lavé, grandissait, timide encore, cette folie de jouissance." (85). The italics are mine.
to destroy and re-create Paris.

It is on a night in autumn that his first wife takes ill and dies.

Aussi fut-il surpris et irrité de trouver, un soir, Angèle malade et couchée. Sa vie d'intérieur, d'une régularité d'horloge, se dérangeait, ce qui l'exaspéра comme une méchanceté calculée de la destinée. ... Le mal empira. Un soir, le médecin leur avoua que la malade ne passerait pas la nuit.1 (91-92)

In the passage describing the death of Angèle, her life is compared to a darkening lamp. The darkness disturbs and frightens Saccard.

Mais il faisait une nuit si noire, les ténèbres au-dehors s'entassaient en masses si étranges, qu'il éprouva un malaise, et machinalement il revint dans la pièce où Angèle se mourait ... la mort venait, ce réveil dans l'agonie était la clarté suprême de la lampe qui s'éteint. ... Il n'éprouva plus qu'un malaise intolérable. ... Saccard, poursuivi par ce regard de mourante, où il lisait un si long reproche, s'appuyait aux meubles, cherchant des coins d'ombre. Puis, défaillant, il voulut chasser ce cauchemar qui le rendait fou, il s'avança dans la clarté de la lampe. (94-95)

Although he remarries immediately, in the autumn of the year, the winter remains only the gestation period for his plans and it is not until spring that his first triumph is accomplished (115). During the following summer, his fortune seems at its apogee; the fortune itself is described with the heat of a summer sun: "Elle brûlait en plein Paris comme un feu de joie colossal" (151); but as

1 Italics mine.
winter approaches Saccard begins to develop worries about his monetary situation. In full winter, his business goes from bad to worse: "Ce fut pour lui un hiver terrible, plein de secousses, un campagne prodigieuse, pendant laquelle il lui fallut chaque jour vaincre la faillite" (207).

Again, however, the winter is just a period of gestation -- "Il mit tout l'hiver à mûrir son plan..." (207) -- and by spring his plan has been "hatched" and he "regardait mûrir son plan avec dévotion" (232). By mid-spring (during Lent) Saccard has overcome his problem with Larsonneau, he has seen Maxime betrothed to a rich young woman, the Crédit viticole has become prosperous once again and he succeeds in getting Renée to sign the last of her property over to him.

We see, then, that Saccard's cycle conforms to the phases of the cycle as described by Mr Frye and others. Renée's cycle, on the contrary, is a virtual reversal of the normal sequence of the phases of the cycle. That she is seen as the manifestation of the characters subordinated to the third phase, a siren and a traitress, and that her life is a veritable tragedy, would seem to justify this reversal of the typical structure.

Durand, in *Les structures anthropologiques de l'imaginaire*, writes of this reversal, which he calls "euphemization", and says that it is part and parcel of the femi-
nization of man's original Fall. Feminizing evil of euphemizing it, of rendering it less harmful. 
dency to euphemize the most mortal and brutal terr simple erotic or carnal fears,\textsuperscript{1} is well shown in Renée, the voluptuous siren, personifies this pro tendency and thus her reversal of time values beco surprising than normally it would seem. Durand te. so many words that euphemization is itself indicat: ambivalence "à partir de laquelle les attitudes de temps ... peuvent s'inverser,"\textsuperscript{2} and continues with "théorie des contraires de type hégélien"\textsuperscript{3} by show: that, in this theory, night and (by extension) fa winter may play a positive role. It is this theory traries that we find exhibited throughout Renée's s

Since M. Durand has spoken especially of th zation of the Fall as being the beginning of euphem and reversal, it is interesting to note that the fa rape, of Renée, as recounted in the second chapter Curée, marks the start of her bout with the revers her own time cycle. This dreadful event, which too by the way, in summer--the usual zenith of good for romance--is the turning point in her cyclical life.

\textsuperscript{2}Ibid. p. 221.
\textsuperscript{3}Ibid., p. 129.
powers of darkness and winter have triumphed in mid-summer.

La faute qui amena plus tard sor mariage avec Saccard, ce viol brutal qu'elle subit avec une sorte d'attente épouvantée, la fit ensuite se mépriser, et fut pour beaucoup dans l'abandon de toute sa vie. Elle pensa qu'elle n'avait plus à lutter contre le mal, qu'il était en elle, que la logique l'autorisait à aller jusqu'au bout de la science mauvaise. (138)

From this point she becomes the siren of the autumn-evening phase. "Renée ... était apparue une nuit dans le ciel parisien comme la fée excentrique des voluptés mondaines..." (138). All of her beginnings take place in the autumn and/or its corresponding time of day, whereas spring or dawn is the usual herald of creation and of commencement.

The first time Renée meets Saccard is at dusk one autumn evening, at which meeting she is relieved of the depression she had felt in late summer because of her pregnancy, and is transformed into "her old self".

La scène se passa le soir, à la tombée de la nuit, dans une salle basse de l'hôtel Béraud. Il s'examinèrent curieusement. Renée, depuis qu'on négoçiait son mariage, avait retrouvé son allure d'écervelée, sa tête folle.... Elle trouva Saccard ... parfait de ton et de manières. (102)

The new town and the new life begun in autumn excite her. "Renée, installée luxueusement dans l'appartement ... au milieu de ce Paris nouveau dont elle allait être une des reines, méditait ses futures toilettes et s'essayait à sa vie de grande mondaine..." (108). From this point, throughout the winter, her need for luxury matures,
and she spends more and more money—literally wallowing in her new-found opulence. She is now, this winter, in her zenith stage, happy and very, very excited.

Toward spring, the novelty begins to wear thin and Renée even pronounces the words, "Le matin, on s'ennuie à mourir" (121). It is not long, however, before the young wife awakens, in the autumn-winter vacation of 1854, from the "death" of boredom through her meeting with her stepson, Maxime. From the first moment, these two are taken with instant mutual admiration. During the winter, they become accomplices in Maxime's nights of debauchery. Renée is totally in her element; again, winter come, she is at her zenith—happy, occupied with "romance", she is in her Paradise. As the months pass, Maxime returns to school and his step-mother again becomes "bored to death."

The only real happiness she finds is at dusk one autumn day:

Un jour, au crépuscule, comme elle était sortie à pied pour aller voir son père, ... elle s'aperçut, au retour ... qu'elle était suivie par un jeune homme. ... le jour mourait avec une douceur amoureuse. ... elle trouva l'aventure piquante, elle en fut flattée comme d'un hommage nouveau, un peu brutal, mais dont la grossièreté même la chatouillait. ... Cet amour de rencontre, trouvé et accepté dans la rue, fut un de ses plaisirs les plus vifs. (140)

Things begin to look brighter when, in October, Maxime returns to go to school in Paris (126). They de-
light in each other's company: at night they play together (132), but "[le] matin... elle sentait un silence écrasant, un vide immense " (139). Often during the day when boredom overtakes her, she retires (as we have already seen) to her dark and warm womb/room, simulating night by closing all of her draperies about her, lighting a fire, and sleeping; and later, upon emerging, she feels refreshed (139).

It is at night, at a party, some time after Maxime comes here to stay, that Renée experiences one of the (if not the single) most important event of her life: the emperor singles her out, speaks to her, and compliments her on her beauty! She is overwhelmed, never forgetting the thrill of that night.

Pendant un mois, Renée n'en dormit pas. La grande soirée arriva, et elle était toute tremblante... Elle avait une toilette prodigieuse de grâce et d'originalité... elle éprouva un moment d'embarras. Mais les glaces, où elle se voyait adorable, la rassurèrent vite...

...........................

Depuis cette soirée, elle revint souvent au Tuileries, elle eut même l'honneur d'être complimenter à haute voix par Sa Majesté, et de devenir un peu son amie; mais elle se rappela toujours la marche lente et alourdie du prince au milieu du salon, entre les deux rangées d'épaules; et, quand elle goûtait quelque joie nouvelle dans la fortune grandissante de son mari, elle revo- yait l'empereur dominant les gorges inclinées, venant à elle, la comparant à un œillet que le vieux général lui conseillait de mettre à sa boutonnière. C'était, pour elle, la note aiguë de sa vie. (154-156)

It is the next autumn, one evening, in the darkness
of the greenhouse, that Renée finally realizes that her most cherished dream would be to have Maxime as a lover. "Puis, tout autour, du noir s'entassait; les berceaux, avec leur draperies de lianes, se noyaient dans les ténèbres ... Ce n'était plus la rêverie flottante, la grise tentation du crépuscule. Maintenant un désir net, aigu, l'em-lissait" (75). We are told later that it had been "pendant cette promenade d'automne, au crépuscule, ... que l'idée vague de l'inceste lui vint..." (197).

It is two weeks after this revelation in the greenhouse, still during autumn, and again at night, that her only true "love" affair is consummated.

Le printemps, comme il arrive parfois dans les derniers jours d'octobre, semblait être revenue; la nuit avait des tiédeurs de mai, et les quelques frissons froids qui passaient, mettaient dans l'air une gaieté de plus [et] ... réveillaient ses désirs endormis. (162)

They rejoice in their new-found love and revel in it during the remainder of autumn and throughout the winter, the very height of Renée's happiness. The contrast between the cycles of Renée and her husband are graphically pointed out here (portions of which have been seen above):

Ce fut pour [Saccard] un hiver terrible ... pendant [lequel] il lui fallut chaque jour vaincre la faillite....Cet hiver fut pour Renée une longue joie. Elle ne souffrait que du besoin d'argent. ... Mais cette misère cachée était pour elle une volupté de plus. (207-208)
Maxime visits his mother/lover at night through this long delicious winter and during the day she sleeps by the fire, locked in her room, afflicted with "nausées et ...douleurs de tête" (157), and often having hideous, frightening nightmares (157, 185-186).

Frequently during this season, they meet in their dark greenhouse at night and there take place the most passionate, exciting nights of their love affair (200-203). Only on occasion does Renée take Maxime there during the day—and then only on those dark, dreary "jours mauvais" (199). The entire cycle of the symbolic death and renaissance of their love over this winter period (in the artificial summer of the greenhouse) is described effectively in Earth terms:

Ses baisers fleurissaient et se fanaient, comme les fleurs rouges de la grande mauve, qui durent à peine quelques heures, et qui renaissent sans cesse, pareilles aux lèvres meurtries et insatiables d'une Messaline géante. (203)

1"Le jeune homme ne se retira qu'à six heures du matin. Elle lui donna la clef ... en lui faisant jurer de revenir tous les soirs." (195)

2"Renée sommeilla toute la journée devant le feu." (185)

3Often we see in La Curée that, though in reality the season is spring, it seems more like autumn, and vice versa. For Renée, where winter is her "summer" phase, her winters (nights) often simulate summers (days) and the reverse is also true. See pp. 41, 162.
Following winter, even a glorious one, Nature always is in spring and with it, for Renée, disillusionment symbolic death. "Les amants avaient l'amour du nouveau. ... Puis, quand vint le printemps ... leur amour lui-s'y ennuya" (211-213). This springtime, the contrast on the Saccards is again illustrated for, while Saccard rdait mûrir son plan avec dévotion" (231), Maxime tells that "Ça se voit tous les jours qu'on ne s'aime plus"

Finally, the total death of their affair takes place y Lent; this is, in early spring. Maxime announces his age to Louise, marries her in the summer and Renée is alone, dis-covered, symbolically and literally naked. She spends her "tristes matinées de printemps" (295) King about her happiness of "l'autre hiver" (293). Du-the day she dreams of night: "Alors, en face de ce jour, de ces nappes de soleil, elle songea à la cen-ne du crépuscule qu'elle avait vue tomber un soir is feuillages jaunis"(307). In agony, she has found f completely and utterly alone, "ne sachant à quoi e temps."... Et rien ne la touchait, dans l'ennui e qui l'écrasait. [Ce printemps] c'était la fin femme" (303).

1Italics mine.
As the summer comes—and as it progresses—she becomes more and more depressed, dreaming only of that happy winter when she had Maxime's love (303-304). The events of this summer only serve to heighten her despair: Céleste leaves her, she sees the emperor who now seems to be nothing more than a pitiful old man, she discovers the renewed friendship of Maxime and his father, she loses all her money gambling and, worst of all, she finds she is no longer beautiful (303, 307).

After Renée's complete downfall (as in the original fall) it would logically follow that Renée must die in the end—and she does. The irony of the situation is that her death occurs in winter.\footnote{We read at the end of the last chapter that "Elle avait besoin du soleil" (306) and, in the penultimate paragraph of the book, "...elle sanglota dans la nuit tombante." (313) This is a distinct change from her previous cycle and leads up to the last paragraph in the book which reads, simply, "L'hiver suivant, ... Renée mourut d'une meningite aiguë." (313)} The reasons for this re-reversal of time phases could be multiple: perhaps her experience of pain and her subsequent repentance and shame served as purification for her, such that now she may revert to "normal" time; perhaps, on the other hand, physical death is merely a new beginning for her. Also, Desmond, Frye, and Liade all speak of heroes, kings or scapegoats dying at the end of vegetative cycles, one of which is the time of...
the New Year.  

The contrast, as we have seen, between husband and wife, indeed between anyone else and Renée, is emphasized repeatedly throughout La Curée by means of this time cycle reversal: throughout the novel Saccard's business affairs are taken care of during the daylight hours and Renée's affairs of the heart occur at night. Zola says as much: "Il avait tiré sa colossale fortune de chaque matin mangée chaque soir. ... " (179). During winter, we are told that Saccard hates darkness and cold: "Saccard, que rien jusque-là n'avait décontenancé, fut glacé par la froideur et le demi-jour de l'appartement..." (102), while his second wife, perhaps influenced by her father who had always lived constantly under those conditions, loves the night: "... et c'était dans les ténèbres ... qu'elle trouvait quelque consolation ..." (173) and the cold: "Cela les amusait d'avoir froid" (211).

This is re-emphasized at the end, with striking clarity. While Renée spends her "tristes matinées de printemps" alone in hideous boredom, Saccard "renouvelait le coup de fortune..." (295); and while Renée agonizes over

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"des heures de jouissance mortes à jamais;" Sidonie uses Saccard's money to take a pleasure/business trip to England and thus fulfill one of her life-long ambitions; Céleste saves enough money to move back to the country, thereby fulfilling her long-time ambition; and Maxime marries a rich woman who dies and leaves him with enough money to spend lavishly for a life-time, thus fulfilling his most cherished dreams.

The language of the myth underscores the contrast: while things that happen in favor of Saccard are described as daylight things: Renée's "signature tombait comme un rayon de soleil" (289); for Renée the opposite holds true: "...lorsque le coupé roula au soleil clair, ... toute sa douleur s'éveilla" (218).

The end of the novel, though ironic, remains a study in contrasts. Renée, who seems to have undergone a period of purification, of shame and repentance, has righted her previously reversed cycle by dying in winter. Saccard, on the other hand, who has betrayed his wife, seems to have become more and more corrupt perhaps reversing his cycle and prospering in winter.\(^1\) The cycles of the heroes of

\(^1\)He profits, of course, through Renée's fall and subsequent death; but also, his spring days are now described as resembling winter, just as Renée's autumn days used to resemble spring. "Trois mois plus tard, par une
these two stories remain totally at odds.

de ces tristes matinées de printemps qui ramènent dans Pa-
ris le jour bas et l'humidité sale de l'hiver, Aristide
Saccard ... renouvelait le coup de fortune...." (295)
In La Curée, mythic cyclical time plays a great structural and thematic role. It serves to highlight the very opposing values and needs of the heroes, points up the differences in quests and responses to quests, and perhaps gives us some hint as to why two succeed (one of whom conforms to natural time phase sequence and all other rules of the quest, while the other subordinates himself totally to his guides—even in his time cycles), and why the other fails—refusing to follow any rules and going against Nature even in her lack of conformity to normal time cycles.
CHART ONE
SACCARD'S TIME CYCLE

SUMMER

1. Comes to Paris, no money
2. Begins work
3. Prospers, relatively speaking
4. Angèle dies
5. Marries Renée
6. Business buds
7. Fortune flowers
10. Maxime gets engaged, Renée signs.
11. Maxime marries, S. prospers as never before.

FALL

WINTER

9. Dreadful winter
1. Meets, marries Saccard

5. Falls in love with Maxime

9. Attempt at play

11. Death

2. Meets Maxime, who relieves boredom

4. Boredom becomes unbearable

8. Renée’s agony

10. Continued disillusion

6. Winter of ecstasy

7. Maxime marries

3. Temporarily loses
CONCLUSION

An examination of archetypal patterns in La Curée reveals that Zola had a profound feeling for the myth, not only its form but also its significance. Through his use of all of the elements of what was later to be called the Monomyth, Zola reveals the meaning of life (no matter how ugly)—and most importantly, its transcendence—to the people of his time. Contrary to what some believe, Zola had great respect for money and the other "evils" of his world: "L'argent, empoisonneur et destructeur, devenait le ferment de toute végétation sociale (...) Tout le bien naissait de lui, qui faisait tout le mal.' Et Zola lui-même, commentant son livre: 'Je n'attaque ni ne défends l'argent, je le montre comme une force nécessaire jusqu'à ce jour, comme un facteur de la civilisation et du progrès.'

Through his art he explains this fact about evil, and the other regulations of the cosmos, to the "lost souls" of his time.

This leads to the revelation that all men and women must pass through the same stages of initiation and must ______

always conform to the same rules of the Cosmos as have all men and women throughout human history. Even though some of the societal rules seem to evolve over the centuries, these basic laws do not. The Monomyth is the channel through which man in all places and at all times has taught his fellows the significance of this all-important universal knowledge.

Zola shows us life, its universal and timeless forms and requirements and, fortunately, he does so in a fascinating fashion, without didacticism. This interpretation questions the statements made by Claude Duchet that Renée's tragedy "dans un monde cynique ... n'a pas de place et sa mort plus de sens,"\(^1\) and that Saccard's "génie est destructeur"\(^2\). If these heroes show us the way of the Cosmos, their tragedy is not in vain and their lives are not destructive. They are truly heroes of a significant myth, teaching us the order of things.

In *La Curée*, Zola has written a true myth, a timeless exposé on life.

It has been pointed out, however, that Zola's characters in *La Curée* are hardly "heroic" in the sense usually given to that term in relation to the myth. Although

\(^1\) Claude, Duchet, in his preface to *La Curée*, p. 25.

\(^2\) Ibid.
Joseph Campbell says that heroes "are by no means always beautiful, always benign, or even necessarily virtuous," far transcending "the scales of human value";¹ it must be admitted that to call "hero" a character who is called by his creator a "bandit" and a "bête affamée", who uses lies, blackmail, forgery and extortion to overcome his adversaries, is stretching the limits of even Professor Campbell's statement. Although Saccard's "murdering" of Paris (and help in the "destruction" of his two wives) does lead to a new Paris and the re-vitalization of society, his motives are far from philanthropic—his aims are strictly selfish and his means could be better described as ruthless than courageous.

We have seen that in myth the androgynous character is generally revered as being "more than man," a whole, complete being; yet in La Curée the implication is that the homme-femme of Zola is more of a symbol of the putrefaction of the old society than a symbol of the wholeness and health of the new.

Also, the apocalyptic symbols which we find in La Curée and which Mr Frye says are proper to undisplaced myth—the city, the garden, the road or way (staircase, architectural images, boulevards), the circulation of water (the Seine), the identity of the human body and vegetable worlds,

¹Campbell, Hero, p. 15.
and the circle, to name but a few—are offset by the demonic symbols which are more proper to ironic literature "in the last phase in which it returns to myth"\(^1\): the nightmares, confusion, the scapegoat motif, the menacing powers of nature, the sinister forest, sexuality in the form of incest, hermaphroditism and homosexuality, the sphinx in the greenhouse, the comparison of the heroes to wild animals and birds of prey, and even the comparison of the "god" to a beast ("le dieu, accroupi, scellé au mur, trapu et dormant, avec ... ses flancs épais, son air de brute divine" [135]).

Because of these last reasons, the conclusion that *La Curée*—which is in some ways extremely true-to-life, even realistic—is a myth must be tempered with the statement that the ironic dimension of the story—well manifested even in the title—does "displace the myth (to use Frye's expression). Thus, *La Curée*, although not exclusively *mythos* but ironically displaced myth, is still and undeniably myth.
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