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The Legacy of the Beast: Patrilinearity and Rupture in Zola's La Bête humaine and Freud's Totem and Taboo

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Abstract

This article explores the legacy of primitive violence evoked by Zola and Freud in *La Bête humaine* (1890) and *Totem and Taboo* (1913) respectively, and to show how Zola's and Freud's use of a paradigm of primitive aggression might be ideologically complicit with a violent inclination in their contemporaneous societies. This issue will be considered in its relations with the notions of patrilinearity and rupture, concepts which are integral to both texts, and which, it shall be argued, constitute in some sense the essence of patriarchy. Reading both writers through the prism of Deleuze's theory, patrilinearity itself will begin to appear as a series of ruptures rather than a continuous genealogy, a history of struggle which both perpetuates and conceals the dominance of violence. The ambivalence of Freud's and Zola's rendering of that violence will ultimately appear as an ethical challenge to the reader.

Stevenson's 'Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde' (1886) begins with an odd testament. Henry Jekyll, renowned physician, has made a holographic will bequeathing the entirety of his estate to his mysterious 'friend and benefactor', Mr Edward Hyde.[1] Jekyll's perplexed lawyer Utterson sets out to discover more about Hyde, and setting eyes on him for the first time, is struck by a sense of 'disgust, loathing and fear' which Mr Hyde's considerable ugliness alone does not suffice to explain. 'There must be something more', Utterson reasons: 'God bless me, the man seems hardly human! Something troglodytic, shall we say?'.[2] Perhaps the choice of the word 'troglodytic' is rather throwaway: there is after all only 'something troglodytic' about Hyde. But the word is a resonant one, and helps introduce one of the issues that will concern me in this article. For if on one hand Hyde resembles the primitive cavemen who are our putative common ancestors, and therefore in some sense our benefactors (to use Jekyll's word), what are we to make of the fact that Hyde is now Jekyll's beneficiary, the presumptive heir to the latter's entire estate? Moreover, what conclusions are we to draw from that peculiar chronology whereby the 'primitive' visage of Edward Hyde is in fact the *future* face of the civilized Henry Jekyll, who, by the end of the story, will have permanently taken on this troglodytic identity? More generally: to just what extent does a primitive inheritance animate our present and carve out our future?

It is these questions that I shall attempt to answer in my readings of Émile Zola's *La Bête humaine* (1890) and various works by Sigmund Freud. In doing so, I shall have recourse to two related concepts: those of patrilinearity and rupture, my free translation of Zola's *fêlure*, a concept so suggestively explored by Gilles Deleuze in his essay 'Zola et la fêlure'. In *La Bête humaine*, the word *fêlure*, an established

leitmotif in *Les Rougon-Macquart* since *La Fortune des Rougon*, is elevated to the status of a theoretical concept, indispensable to understanding the plight of Zola's extended family. Yet while the topos of *la fêlure* originates in a description of Adélaïde Fouque's genetic legacy (she has 'le cerveau fêlé comme son père'[3]), the concept ought not, I think, to be understood too rigidly as regards its connection to the Rougon-Macquart family; nor should it be understood simply in literal terms as some order of medical condition.[4] What Deleuze shows in his essay, and what I hope to elaborate with rather different emphases in mine, is that *la fêlure* has a vast conceptual valence which can be perceived throughout the series. Nowhere is this more evident than in *La Bête humaine*, for if it is in this novel that Zola insists most emphatically upon *la fêlure* as a quasi-medical concept, it is also here that the language and the drama of what I shall call 'rupture' are at their most varied and intense. In *La Bête humaine*, I shall argue, images and narratives of rupture create a dystopian version of human relations in which contact between individuals is impossible unless mediated by a weapon.

This impossibility seems to apply not simply to a single pathological family, but to the family in general, and to the relations of fathers and sons in particular, where the novel creates models of aggressive rupture which speak interestingly to the family narratives of Sigmund Freud. Freud has been seen as one of the great turn-of-the-century narrators of family life, a 'younger brother' of Zola. Together, these two men of eerily similar appearance are the bearded patriarchs of troubled turn-of-the-century positivism. My aim will be to show that Zola's *La Bête humaine* and Freud's *Totem and Taboo* (1913) are in some sense comparable, and that the two texts taken together give us important insights both into the complex interrelation of rupture and

patrilinearity, and into the ideological necessity of those concepts for patriarchy, a necessity which is, as we shall see, both diagnosed and served by Freud's and Zola's ideologically embedded theoretical renderings.

'Scenes from deep time'

The comparison I intend to make is suggested in the first instance by the following well-known passage from *La Bête humaine*:

Puisque [Jacques] ne les connaissait pas, quelle fureur pouvait-il avoir contre [les femmes] ? car, chaque fois, c'était comme une soudaine crise de rage aveugle, une soif toujours renaissante de venger des offenses très anciennes dont il aurait perdu l'exacte mémoire. Cela venait-il donc de si loin, du mal que les femmes avaient fait à sa race, de la rancune amassée de mâle en mâle, depuis la première tromperie au fond des cavernes ? (1044)

This troglodytic image, which Zola will insist upon a number of times, has some interesting intertextual echoes. In the first instance, we might see here a literary version of the pictorial phenomenon described by Martin J. S. Rudwick as 'scenes from deep time', those speculative reconstructions of the prehistoric world which combined scientific research with the conventions of visual realism and imaginative flights of fantasy to produce educational and entertaining 'snapshots' of the ancient past.[5] The scene from deep time, the development of which Rudwick locates firmly in the nineteenth-century, had by the time of *La Bête humaine* become very familiar in France, thanks to works such as Pierre Boitard's *Paris avant les hommes* (1861) and

Louis Figuier's *L'Homme primitif* (1871). Written at a time when discoveries of human fossils were increasing in number, Zola's text arguably evokes these commonplace and popular images.

Yet the passage is also inspired by criminologist Cesare Lombroso's *L'Uomo delinquente* (1876; translated as *L'Homme criminel* in 1887), as Henri Mitterand points out in his notes to the Pléiade edition, citing the following passage: 'Les crimes les plus affreux, les plus barbares, ont un point de départ physiologique, atavique, dans ces instincts animaux qui peuvent bien s'émousser pour un temps dans l'homme [...] mais qui renaissent tout à coup sous l'influence de certaines circonstances' (1765). Now Lombroso's emphasis on atavism and animalism undeniably finds echoes in Zola's novels, yet Mitterand's claim that 'cette idée est empruntée à *L'Homme criminel* de Cesare Lombroso' elides a significant difference between Lombroso's and Zola's rendering of the primal origins of crime. While Lombroso speaks of 'instinct' as animal in the sense of pre-human, Zola's refers to 'des offenses', 'la rancune', 'la première tromperie', words which participate in a moral symbolism suggestive of creatures more sophisticated than the prominent-jawed reprobates of Lombroso's reductive pathology. Zola's primal vision is not animalistic, but theological, civil and economic, a poetics of sin, guilt and retribution which seems less to echo Lombroso, and more to anticipate Freud.

Freud's version of the first parricide, in *Totem and Taboo*, runs thus:

A violent and jealous father [...] keeps all the females for himself and drives away his sons as they grow up. [....] One day the brothers who had been driven out came together, killed and devoured their father and so made an end to the patriarchal horde.

[....] The totem meal [...] would thus be a repetition and commemoration of this memorable and criminal deed, which was the beginning of so many things—of social organisation, of moral restrictions and of religion.[6]

This parricide is recognized by Freud as the beginning of morality: the 'Darwinian' anarchy of the original crime is followed by guilt ('A sense of guilt made its appearance'), and thus by the origin of the human proper. The crime was also the occasion of the first instance of patrilineal inheritance, since the women of the horde reverted on the father's death to the sons; yet this was equally the first instance of *failed* patrilineal inheritance, too, since the sons' guilt led them to refuse the legacy: 'They revoked their deed and renounced its fruits by resigning their claim to the women who had now been set free.'[7]

How does Freud's crime relate to Zola's? The crime Zola's narrator refers to as 'la première tromperie au fond des cavernes' is, unlike Freud's, fairly obviously understood to have been committed by a woman, since it appears as an explanation of Jacques's murderous misogyny. It might equally be objected here that Freud's and Zola's 'primal scenes' are deployed in strategically very different ways: while Zola's 'scene from deep time' is provided in order to poeticize and in a sense to motivate Jacques's explicitly pathological, aberrant disposition, Freud's can be seen as doubly normative, in that it is both 'normal' (the parricide becomes integral to normal human development, in the form of the Oedipus complex) and serves to impose norms (the crime is the origin of nothing less than 'social organisation', we recall). Yet Zola's phrase 'la première tromperie au fond des cavernes' seems intentionally to create a sense of mythic abstraction, and his evocation of patrilinearity ('de mâle en mâle')

suggests fairly clearly that Jacques's 'instincts' are only aberrant in their tendency to become manifest; they are present, it is implied, in *all* men. In this way, Zola's primal scene appears to approximate to Freud's, the differences between them seeming characteristic of the discursive and historical parameters of their disciplines (Naturalism pathologizes, where psychoanalysis extrapolates generalities from the specific).

I shall therefore argue later that the two 'ancient' crimes are connected, but for now I wish to contrast Freud's primal crime story with Zola's modern one, the murder of the Président Grandmorin by Henri and Séverine Roubaud, a scene whose witnessing by Jacques Lantier has been described by one critic as a 'fantasme de la mort du père'.[8] Grandmorin is in some sense the image of the primal father, combining symbolic authority (his title 'Président', and his 'grand' name) with a certain violence ('il faisait tout trembler autour de lui' (1005)) and, most importantly, an exaggerated, monopolistic virility: he is in charge of a girls' school which, given his years-long affair with his ward Séverine, might almost be said to resemble a personal harem. Grandmorin is, moreover, a substitute father to Roubaud, a protector thanks to whom Roubaud keeps his position with the railway despite certain political difficulties (1004). When Roubaud discovers the liaison between the Président and Séverine, he flies into a rage and determines to assassinate the Président on the train to Rouen that evening.

Once again, the 'parricide' leads to a problematic inheritance, the bequest of the house at la Croix-de-Maufras, a bequest which, if accepted, makes obvious the couple's guilt: 'Dès lors, le mobile du meurtre était trouvé : les Roubaud, connaissant le legs, avaient pu assassiner leur bienfaiteur pour entrer en jouissance immédiate'

(1078). The couple also remove a sum of money and a watch from the dead man's body, 'pour faire croire au vol', which their scruples initially prevent them from spending (1138). A sense of guilt makes its appearance, focused, perhaps in a reference to Poe's 'The Tell-Tale Heart' (1843), on the floorboard beneath which the booty has been stashed: 'pour rien au monde, Roubaud n'aurait fouillé là ; c'était comme un charnier, un trou d'épouvante et de mort, où des spectres l'attendaient' (1138). And there is of course a third inheritance: upon the Président's death, Roubaud comes for the first time into full, 'unadulterated' possession of Séverine. Yet Roubaud is ultimately unable to endure contact with her as a direct result of the murder: 'il y avait eu une désorganisation progressive, comme une infiltration du crime, qui décomposait cet homme, et qui avait pourri tout lien entre eux' (1160). This emotional splitting, described as a 'séparation' and a 'divorce' (1140-41) finds its physical manifestation in the marriage bed, where a careful distance is maintained between the accomplices: 'les nuits où ils ne pouvaient éviter le lit commun, ils se tenaient aux deux bords' (1141). Like Freud's band of brothers, then, Roubaud renounces the fruits of his deed by refusing to possess Séverine sexually. On the rare occasions when he does, it is for Séverine at least as if the primal crime were being repeated: 'un soir, comme la bougie n'était pas éteinte, elle cria : sur elle, dans cette face rouge, elle avait cru revoir la face de l'assassin' (1140). A kind of incest taboo has sprung up in memory of the murdered 'father', and the sexual act thereby takes on a horrific quality.

A parallel now emerges, then, between Zola's contemporary narrative and Freud's ancient one, and this should probably not surprise us, not so much because Freud's text is a theoretically accurate template (though it may be, in a round about

way), but rather because Freud's primitive story represents precisely an attempt to interpret certain phenomena of psychic life in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It is not, crucially, the psychotic, marginal Jacques Lantier who embodies this parallel, but the seemingly 'normal' and upstanding Roubauds, who, like Dora, the Rat Man and Schreber, emerge from the privileged milieux of *fin de siècle* respectability. To understand the significance of this correspondence, we need to examine more closely the tension between the Freudian and Zolian use of the primitive topos.

Patrilinearity and ancestry

The two narrative layers between which I have distinguished so far, the primitive and the contemporary, can be seen as corollaries of what Gilles Deleuze has called Zola's *grande* and *petite manœuvres*:

L'essentiel de l'épopée, c'est un double registre où les dieux, activement, jouent à leur manière et sur un autre plan l'aventure des hommes et de leurs instincts. Le *drama*, alors, se réfléchit dans un *epos*, la petite généalogie dans une grande généalogie, la petite hérédité dans une grande hérédité, la *petite manœuvre* dans une *grande manœuvre*.[9]

In this somewhat uncharacteristic move, Deleuze separates out what is contingent in the narrative from what is transcendent, the former being subsumed into the latter; hence the manias of individual characters are only ever expressions of *la fêlure*, the fault which is not merely genetic, nor merely social, but somehow both of these and

more than either. To apply the same terminology to Freud is to identify the *petite manœuvre* of the case histories, for instance, over and against the *grande manœuvre* of Freud's narratives of origin, *Totem and Taboo* and *Moses and Monotheism* (1939). In these texts, Freud extrapolates an aetiological narrative (*grande manœuvre*) from the observed phenomena of turn of the century Austria (*petite manœuvre*), for example, from the behaviour of modern children in *Moses*: 'We attribute the same emotional attitudes to these primitive men that we are able to establish by analytic investigation in the primitives of the present day – in our children.'[10] Yet this practice has been severely criticized, notably by Deleuze and Guattari, who object to Freud's conceptual retro-building (and specifically the Oedipus complex) on the grounds that it elevates the historically contingent *petite manœuvre* to the level of a transcendent *grande manœuvre*: 'La fonction d'Œdipe comme dogme est inséparable d'un *forcing* par lequel le théoricien psychanalyste s'élève à la conception d'un Œdipe généralisé.'[11] Such a procedure, Deleuze and Guattari imply, is eurocentric, heterocentric, class-insensitive, historically reductive and, above all, difficult to swallow.

Why, then, should Deleuze privilege Zola's *grande manœuvre* and lambast Freud's? The difference perhaps lies in the generic and discursive distinction which can be made between the two writers. Deleuze finds Zola's production of a transhistorical narrative artistically impressive, but objects to Freud's doing so on the grounds that the narrative he produces and the uses to which that narrative may be put (thanks to its 'superior' discursive position) are fundamentally ideological, in the Althusserian sense of '*une « représentation » du rapport imaginaire des individus à leurs conditions réelles d'existence*'.[12] *Totem and Taboo* has the necessarily unwitting effect of naturalising a set of social relations which are historically speaking

contingent on and determined by prevailing systems of government and economic models. Thus Freud's story can be seen to enshrine and indeed to prettify an entirely contemporaneous 'Darwinian' logic of self-interest, a form of familial relations characterized by ambivalence or antagonism, and a capitalism under which gift-giving between fathers and sons can only be conceived of in the context of the (probably violent) death of the former. Whether or not patriarchy 'really' began with a parricide is thus scarcely relevant to Freud's narrative: what matters is that parricide is constantly reintegrated into successive theoretical mappings of western patriarchal society. This is perhaps what Althusser means when he asserts, after Marx of course, that '*l'idéologie n'a pas d'histoire*'.[13]

We can now re-read Zola's primal narrative, as we have Freud's. What might 'la première tromperie' be? On a first 'Freudian' reading, could it be anything other than the repressed murder of the father, the guilt of which is transferred onto the women for whose bodies the patricide was perpetrated? The deception, then, is rather *une déception* – the disappointment of the band of brothers realising that they are too much in awe of the dead father to claim their inheritance. What *is* inherited – 'amassée de mâle en mâle' – is not women, but an irrational grudge against women, whose 'provocation' of the crime through their sexual desirability leads them to be perceived, unconsciously, as guilty of some 'first deception'. In this way, Jacques's affair with Séverine alienates him from potential father-figure Roubaud, and leads him to plot his murder; yet instead of a repetition of the primal crime, Jacques succeeds only in a symptomatic turning-aside or perversion of that violence, onto Séverine.[14]

But before we conclude that the story of Jacques and Séverine simply reflects a Freudian grand narrative *avant la lettre*, we must take care to remember that, as with Freud, the *petite* in some sense determines the *grande manœuvre*. The women of Jacques bloody fantasies are not described as a primal harem, but as 'les femmes coudoyées dans la rue, les femmes qu'une rencontre faisait ses voisines, une surtout assise près de lui au théâtre' (1044). These visions, recalling Baudelaire's 'A une passante', are entirely modern, based on and implicitly criticising the anonymity of the nineteenth-century metropolis, rather than the panoptic claustrophobia of the 'primal horde'. Indeed, this is the essence of the 'scene from deep time': Rudwick observes that such scenes always carried an ideological load (they might promote particular 'social or even racial goals', for example) which often said more about the nineteenth-century society that produced them than about prehistory.[15] So once again, as in Stevenson's 'strange case', the troglodytic ancestor refuses to remain confined to the past, but is instead released as a demonic *flâneur*, wandering the civilized cityscape in search of a victim. Or rather, the figure of the ancestor is conceived precisely in response to certain 'troglodytic' realities of contemporary life – civilized man always has another face, a monstrous alter-ego who is at once his benefactor and his beneficiary, and whose activity is, for those with eyes to see, very much of the present.[16] The 'parricide' which I have argued is concealed by Jacques's misogynist urges is in this sense perhaps no more ancient than the move away from paternal feudalism to fraternal capitalism, or than the deracination of the urban population which Jacques exemplifies and which patriarchal apologist Barrès would later dramatize as the major social ill of Third Republic France in *Les Déracinés* (1897).

This odd blending of chronological and narrative layers is indicative of Zola's and Freud's mutual concern about the nature of ancestry, patrimony and inheritance in turn of the century Europe and in general. Contrary to more traditional patriarchal discourses of patrimony and lineage, man now has an unseemly past which must be repudiated. While many 'scenes from deep time' achieved this by means of a sanitized narrative emphasizing the 'purposive directionality of earth history', *La Bête humaine* and *Totem and Taboo* set themselves apart by suggesting that there is continuity between the seamy past and the civilized present.[17] In either case, under the newer patrilineal models the source of our ancestry emerges not as a glorious forebear, but as a troglodytic monster, causing only 'disgust, loathing and fear' (in Stevenson's words).[18] What is to be inherited from such a figure appears deeply problematic. The expression of Jacques Lantier's misogyny as 'la rancune amassée de mâle en mâle' reveals that perhaps the only commodity which remains inheritable, or which has at any rate been successfully handed down between generations of men, is a dumb rage against female Otherness. This patrilineal grudge stems, I shall argue, from a chronic dearth of connectivity, and this will return us to the theme of rupture.

'La fêlure'

Earlier, I reiterated Deleuze's claim that in *La Bête humaine*, *la fêlure* is not merely a pseudo-medical label attaching to the Rougon-Macquart family, but rather a polyvalent concept which permeates the text. Indeed, the novel appears in some sense to be composed according to a poetics of rupture, with images of splitting, tearing and, in particular, cutting recurrent throughout. This recurrence has its germ in the very first sentence of the novel: 'En entrant dans la chambre, Roubaud posa sur la

table le pain d'une livre, le pâté et la bouteille de vin blanc' (997). Already, the theme of rupture is tacitly present, in a ghostly foreshadowing. The bread which Roubaud sets on the table implies its own cutting by the knife which Séverine will soon bring home to her husband, the same knife with which the Président Grandmorin and ultimately Séverine herself will be murdered, and which will in the interim be returned to the knife drawer: 'Ils ne souffraient nullement du couteau, le beau couteau neuf acheté par la femme, et que le mari avait planté dans la gorge de l'amant. Simplement lavé, il traînait au fond d'un tiroir, il servait parfois à la mère Simon, pour couper le pain' (1139). The knife cuts the bread in what might be seen as a series of totemic meals, described by Freud, we recall, as 'the repetition and commemoration of a memorable and criminal deed'.[19] Zola's novel provides us with a historically concordant updating of this notion, however, since the sacrificial nature of the cutting of the bread appears lost on the participants (in particular the housekeeper Mme Simon, who knows nothing of the knife's history). In this way, the Roubauds' totem meals express that ideological peculiarity of the modern capitalist condition: 'They no longer believe, *but the things themselves believe for them*.'[20] The meal which Roubaud lays out in the first sentence of the novel is an equally unwitting, proleptic sacrificial feast – a last supper of bread and wine before the murderous deed; a pound of bread ('le pain d'une livre') to be sliced before Roubaud takes his pound of flesh. As he awaits the return of his tardy wife (and the gift of the knife), he furrows his brow in irritation, and thereby seems to have 'le front coupé d'une ligne dure' (1001), a 'phrenological' effect worthy of Lombroso which re-emphasizes the theme of cutting.

Yet if the knife inaugurates the poetics of rupture in *La Bête humaine,* it can be seen that its expression par excellence is the locomotive. The passage of trains between Paris and Le Havre creates striations across the narrative, a series of bar-lines which mark out its unconscious rhythm, and which constitute its most obsessive leitmotifs. It is no coincidence that Zola's most 'psychological' novel should foreground the locomotive, since as Eric Michael Caplan has noted, 'it was an experiment with trains themselves that unwittingly drove a host of prominent nineteenth-century physicians to discover the human unconscious.'[21] As Caplan makes clear, the psychological effects of railway collisions (along with the horrors of modern warfare) actualized the modern pathology of trauma most readily; and trauma can itself be seen as a kind of severance, a failure of contact between parts of consciousness, and between the individual and the world. The railway which could bring about such a splitting presented a machine of unprecedented violence, one which carved up the world as much as it connected urban centres. In *La Bête humaine,* this characteristic of the railway is insisted upon, almost to the point of heavy-handedness. Roubaud surveys the Parisian skyline, where the gare Saint-Lazare appears as a 'tranchée large trouant le quartier de l'Europe', and where 'le pont de l'Europe coupait de son étoile de fer la tranchée jusqu'au tunnel des Batignolles'; a train perceived in the distance is 'une déchirure' (997-98). Individuals struck by trains are said to have been 'coupé' (1033). The railway seems moreover to eliminate any hope of contact: hands that might touch are rendered dead and useless by it, as when, after the collision in Chapter ten, Séverine nearly steps on 'un bras inconnu, roulé là' (1263). Even that macabre contact is averted – the train driver Pecqueux stops her just in time. Earlier, Roubaud's 'cri de véritable colère' (1024) when a couple board his

train carriage (potentially foiling the plan to murder Grandmorin) only parodies the natural frustration experienced at such moments by alienated bourgeois railway passengers whose reluctance to engage in human contact en route was (and remains) proverbial. And crucially, the house at la Croix-de-Maufras which has been separated from the nearest settlement and rendered virtually inaccessible by the Paris line, is described in the same way as the railway's human victims: 'la maison de la Croix-de-Maufras, cette propriété que le chemin de fer a coupée' (1009). Alone with Séverine (whose very name implies a certain 'severance') in a space so radically separated from the rest of the world, the connection Jacques Lantier has sought to make is rendered impossible. While Séverine has striven to 'bind' Jacques to her in the hope of securing his silence, once the couple relocates to the isolated house at la Croix-de-Maufras, the essentially artificial and self-serving 'liens' which she has created (the word recurs incessantly in this context, cf. 1081; 1106; 1122) will not prove strong enough to resist *la fêlure*. Their final rupture is sealed as Jacques makes the killing cut, while outside the Paris express-train retraces the line of alienation and separation.

So we can see that the text is at both a narrative and stylistic level already marked by rupture. Yet what light does this shed on the text's presentation of family relationships? To answer this question, it is helpful to turn to an apparently innocuous moment in Freud's essay 'Family Romances' (1909), where he makes the following claim:

The liberation of the individual [...] from the authority of his parents is one of the most necessary though one of the most painful results brought about by the course of

his development. It is quite essential that that liberation should occur [...]. Indeed, the whole progress of society rests upon the opposition between successive generations.[22]

What Freud argues here seems logical enough, but he takes more for granted than it appears. We ought to ask: why is liberation necessary? And more importantly, why must it be figured as a 'liberation'? Although he acknowledges the possibility of affective bonds between fathers and children, this is only ever after death (through the mourning process) or at a strictly post-theoretical, everyday level; Freud's overarching model, on the other hand, remains explicitly combative, based on 'painful' processes of 'opposition'. This, clearly, is also the paradigm which obtains in Zola's portrayal of loveless father-son relationships: Fouan and Buteau in *La Terre*; Aristide and Maxime in *La Curée*. In *La Débâcle*, the elderly Fouchard begrudges his son Honoré food and shelter during the battle of Sedan, and they separate 'en père et en fils qui n'avaient pas besoin de se voir pour vivre' (V: 524). This is a conception of filial relations which is based on separation and splitting-up, and thus on a kind of violence.

The Deleuzian notion of *la fêlure* can perhaps help us to understand the exact nature of this violence. Deleuze argues that 'l'hérédité n'est pas ce qui passe par la fêlure, elle est la fêlure elle-même : la cassure ou le trou, imperceptibles'.[23] The crack is not only what is inherited (the mental weakness, the tendency to mania); the crack *is* heredity, or, as I would have it, inheritance. Under the logic of patriarchy, as we have seen, the only circumstances under which a transmission may be effected between father and son involve the death of the former, and the very structure of patrilinearity can thus be said to rest on a series of ruptures, rather than on continuity.

Patrilinearity is a violent breaking apart, never a loving contact. Indeed for Freud, patriarchy is famously based precisely on the suppression of contact, of the 'sensuality' of maternity 'which is proved by the evidence of the senses', in favour of the clinical hypothesis of paternity.[24]

Conclusion

So the 'continuity' of patrilinearity succeeds most where it appears to fail entirely: Jacques Lantier, the man without parents or inheritance, without heritage or history, emerges from 'la cassure ou le trou' between two texts carrying only 'la rancune amassée de mâle en mâle', the will to violence which is, and which perpetuates, *la fêlure*. Jacques, springing from nowhere with murder in his eye, is the epitome of *la fêlure* because his 'liberation' from the paternal home is total: as the reader of *L'Assommoir* knows, he was never there, indeed was never born as such, but appears *tout fait* for the purposes of the later novel. This absence of paternal influences does not hinder the transmission of *la fêlure*, however, nor does it preserve him from repeating the same violent patterns: he has somehow successfully internalized those murderous compulsions which represent the family tradition. Jacques is in this sense the product of an imaginary masculine auto-genesis, whereby patrinilearity becomes a kind of asexual reproduction in which women do not feature even as accessories or receptacles, but merely as the objects of a paranoid revilement which, as we have seen, only ever conceals patricidal urges.

If Jacques ultimately redirects those urges away from Roubaud and onto the wrongly inculpated body of Séverine, he will nevertheless be forced to take part in an oedipal clinch: the train-driver Pecqueux, towards whom Jacques 'se montrait

paternel' and with whom he has lived in an incestuous 'ménage à trois' with the engine la Lison (1129-30), will murder him (and die in the process) over a falsely suspected affair. The two men fall from their speeding train, and are 'coupés, hachés, dans leur étreinte, dans cette effroyable embrassade' (1330). Their embrace is a horrid parody of contact, a violent entanglement which reinstantiates the dialectic implied by the ruptured family name 'Rougon-Macquart', a miserable, perpetual struggle for supremacy which can only ever bring about the death of both sides. The '-' of 'Rougon-Macquart' is yet another *fêlure*, another cut, a knife with which the two branches menace one another.

In Zola's work, patrilinearity is revealed to be a self-sustaining history of real and symbolic ruptures, each of which ratifies and legitimates itself by reference to the others. Murder, and particularly parricide, become ideologically enshrined to the point where the murderous structure of patrilinearity is accepted almost religiously, as here, by elderly farmer Fouan in *La Terre*, a few chapters before his death at the hands of his son and daughter-in-law: 'Il ne se plaignait point [...]. Un vieux, ça ne sert à rien et ça coûte. Lui-même avait souhaité la fin de son père. Si, à leur tour, ses enfants désiraient la sienne, il n'en ressentait ni étonnement ni chagrin. Ça devait être' (IV: 734). The tradition of murder, like the tradition of patrilinearity, seems to insist that something *must* happen because it has happened before, a conservative fallacy which denies any form of ethical becoming in favour of a morbid entropy. Zola's ultimate response to this, in *Les Rougon-Macquart* at least, is ambiguous, and appears almost as a challenge to both characters and reader. At the end of *La Débâcle*, Jean Macquart is seen 'marchant à l'avenir, à la grande et rude besogne de toute une France à refaire' (V: 912). The ambiguity lies in the verb *refaire*: to make anew, or merely to repeat?

Can any historical shift, be it the birth of a new republic or the dawn of the twentieth century, somehow rupture uniquely the series of purely repetitive ruptures that is patrilinearity?

The notion that such a redemptive rupture might be possible is perhaps called into question when we consider the disparity in popularity between Zola's *Rougon-Macquart* series and the later *Trois villes*, and particularly, the *Quatre évangiles*, which make more or less (and mostly more) didactic attempts to rise above the sordid crapulence of Adélaïde Fouque's progeny. While the ultimate failure of these novels to capture the reader's attention doubtless lies mostly in the execution, it nevertheless owes something to the very essence of the project: works which are so conspicuously utopian tend to embarrass or offend readers for whom what is truly scandalous is the lack of scandal. In the main, readerly taste appears rather to lean towards the bloodthirsty, which is perhaps why it is called taste: in reading, do we not ritually savour the sanguine tang of violence in yet another sublimatory totem meal? Whether or not a sense of guilt makes its appearance in the greedy reader, whether or not we find something ugly or, indeed, something troglodytic in our narrative preferences, we ought probably to acknowledge that it is in our aesthetic appreciation of the great myths of our species that we come closest to understanding and embodying the true nature and legacy of the beast.

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NOTES

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1. Robert Louis Stevenson, *The 'Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde' and Other Tales of Terror*, ed. by Robert Mighall (London: Penguin Classics, 2002), p.11.

2. Stevenson, p.16.

3. Émile Zola, *Les Rougon-Macquart : Histoire naturelle et sociale d'une famille sous le Second Empire*, 5 vols, ed. by Henri Mitterand (Paris: Gallimard Pléiade, 1960-67), I, 41. Henceforth all references to *Les Rougon-Macquart* will be given in the text in parentheses, and refer to volume IV of this edition unless otherwise stated.

4. The term is used, for instance, in *Nana*, where it describes Fauchery's first inkling of the corruption at the heart of the Countess Sabine's apparently devout salon. Zola, II, 1155.

5. Martin J. S. Rudwick, *Scenes From Deep Time: Early Pictorial Representations of the Prehistoric World* (Chicago University Press, 1992), p.7.

6. Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works*, 24 vols, ed. and trans. by James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press and The Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1953-74), XIII, 141-42. See also XXIII, 81-82. Henceforth *SE*.

7. Rudwick, p.143.

8. Olivier Got, 'Le Regard de la « bête »', *Cahiers naturalistes*, 75 (2001), 57-70 (p.68).

9. Gilles Deleuze, *Logique du sens* (Paris: Minuit, 1969), p.384.

10. Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, *SE* XXIII, 81-82.

11. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *L'Anti-Œdipe (Capitalisme et schizophrénie I)* (Paris: Minuit, 1972), p.60.

12. Louis Althusser, 'Idéologie et appareils idéologiques d'État', in *Positions : 1964-1975* (Paris: Éditions Sociales, 1976), p.101.

13. Althusser, p.99.

14. This scenario recalls Freud's case history of 'Little Hans', whose oedipal desires are at one point expressed by the evisceration, with a knife, of a female doll. See Freud, 'Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-Year-Old Boy', *SE* X, 84.

15. Rudwick, p.250.

16. Note that one of the possible titles Zola considered for the novel was '*Les Dessous du progrès*' (see Zola, 1759).

17. Rudwick, p.246.

18. Even the troglodytic ancestor could however be recuperated by some paternalist conservative orthodoxies, as in the English tradition of 'muscular Christianity', which glorified as divinely ordained man's 'savage' past. See David Rosen, 'The Volcano and the Cathedral: Muscular Christianity and the Origin of Primal Manliness', in Donald E. Hall (ed.), *Muscular Christianity: Embodying the Victorian Age* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp.14-44.

19. Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, *SE* XIII, 142.

20. Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1989), p.34.

21. Eric Michael Caplan, 'Trains, Brains, and Sprains: Railway Spine and the Origins of Psychoneuroses', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 69 (1995), 387-419 (p.387).

See also Freud, 'Hysteria', *SE* I, 51-3, and (with Breuer) *Studies on Hysteria*, *SE* II, 213.

22. Freud, 'Family Romances', *SE* IX, 237.

23. Deleuze, p.373.

24. Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, *SE* XXIII, 114. This thesis was originally advanced by Bachofen, with whose work Freud was certainly familiar (cf. *Totem and Taboo*, *SE* XIII, 144).

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