

French essays -
nineteenth century
french fiction



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The Representations of Women in Nineteenth Century French Fiction

Discuss the representations of women in *La Curée* (by Zola), *Germinie Lacerteux* (by Edmond et Jules de Goncourt), *La Dame aux Camélias* (n. bthe play, not the novel by Dumas fils) and *Le Spleen de Paris* (by Baudelaire).

This research investigates in depth therepresentations of women in such French fiction as *La Curée* by Emile Zola, *Germinie Lacerteux* by Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, *La Dame aux Camélias* by AlexanderDumas the younger and *Le Spleen de Paris* by Charles Baudelaire. The receivedfindings suggest that in these literary works the writers maintain the ideas ofrealism and naturalism in regard to female characters, rejecting the romanticportrayal of females and stressing on their freedom and sexuality. Somefindings of the dissertation are consistent with the earlier studies of Frenchliterature in the nineteenth century, while other results provide newinterpretations of a female issue.

1 Statement of the problem

The representations of women in Frenchliterature of the nineteenth century reflect the writers' attempts to providetheir own vision on females in the era of Libertinage, praising theirprinciples of liberty, but implicitly criticising their sexuality and weakness. Contrary to Romantic writers, such authors as Emile Zola, Charles Baudelaire, AlexanderDumas the younger and the Goncourt brothers adhere to the ideas of realism andnaturalism in their portrayals of women, proving that only the observation of differentsides of a person's essence can provide understanding of the reasons behindfemale degradation

and failure. In this regard, these writers represent their female characters through social, cultural and familial contexts.

2 Introduction

In France the nineteenth century was characterised by various social changes that gave rise to the principles of libertinage and equality, but also negatively influenced the most subordinate group - French females. The pleasure became the principal feature of French style of life. In view of these changes French fiction of the nineteenth century was divided into four literary movements: naturalism, symbolism, romanticism and realism. Although the currents differed from each other, they stressed on the importance of a person and the rejection of pure reason and social standards. Following these movements, French writers started to discuss a female issue through their female characters, uncovering such negative social phenomena as female subjugation, divorce, prostitution, psychological disorders of women and depopulation. In particular, they revealed that, despite females' attempts to achieve equality with males, society continued to impose certain social norms and stereotypes on women, depriving them of the possibility to follow their own paths. A woman who worked as a prostitute or a servant was usually regarded as a subject, a person of secondary importance in patriarchal French world, but it was this female who was often portrayed in nineteenth-century fiction.

The aim of this dissertation is to discuss the representations of females in *La Curée* by Emile Zola, *Germinie Lacerteux* by Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, *La Dame aux Camélias* by Alexander Dumas the younger and *Le Spleen de*

Paris by Charles Baudelaire. The paper is divided into several chapters. Chapter 1 provides a statement of the problem that reveals the core of the analysis. Chapter 2 reflects a general overview of the issue, observing the social and historical contexts of the period when the discussed works are written. Chapter 3 evaluates some critical analyses of nineteenth-century French fiction. Chapter 4 demonstrates the theoretical research methods that are utilised in the research. Chapter 5 investigates in depth the representations of women in each novel, focusing on both principal and secondary female characters. Chapter 6 summarises the received results, and Chapter 7 points at the limitations of the dissertation and proposes some suggestions for further research of Zola, Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, Dumas the younger, and Baudelaire.

3 Review of the literature

Nineteenth-century French literature attracts attentions of various critics who provide rather contradictory viewpoints on literary works of French writers. This can be explained by the fact that in the period of the French Revolution and Libertinage, French literature began to move away from the traditional portrayals of characters to the more realistic representations. As Desmarais puts it, all the writers of the 19th century are more or less romantic; but none of them could be described as traditional. Introducing innovative elements into their literary works, these French writers made attempts to either uncover different sides of reality or to contrast the nineteenth century with the past. For instance, analysing the literary legacy of Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, Elisabeth Badinter cites words of Juliette Adam who claims that the Goncourts so loved and frequented eighteenth-century women that they

<https://assignbuster.com/french-essays-nineteenth-century-french-fiction/>

despised the women of thenineteenth, consigning them to wickedness, debauchery or imbecility.

Charles Baudelaire's collection of prose texts *La Spleen de Paris* was published only after his death and the critics paid no attention to this literary masterpiece; only at the beginning of the twentieth century Baudelaire's work was acknowledged as one of the best prose fiction. In particular, Robert Kopp draws a parallel between *La Spleen de Paris* and Baudelaire's poetry, pointing at the fact that these prose texts reflect the themes raised in the majority of Baudelaire's poems. Emile Zola's novel *La Curée* was exposed to censure since its publication, but at the end of the twentieth century it was praised by modern critics as a splendid literary work of naturalism. Contrary to Zola and Baudelaire, the play *La Dame aux Camélias* by Dumas the younger was accepted by French audience of the nineteenth century with delight, and its principal character Marguerite became the prototype of many female characters in films, plays and musicals. One of the most famous opera produced on Dumas' play was Verdi's *La Traviata*.

4 Research methodology

The research in this dissertation is conducted, utilising a social constructionist approach and a feminist approach. Applying to these methods, the paper analyses the representations of women from different perspectives and interpretations. The social constructionist approach uncovers the impact of society on the formation of women and its attitude towards those females who reject the existing stereotypes. Thus, this method is crucial for investigating the portrayal of women in French fiction. Another appropriate

method is the feminist approach that is aimed at observing gender issues in literature, criticising patriarchal society that specifically creates the differences between men and women and imposes specific roles on women. As females have been usually conformed to certain stereotypes in literature, the feminist approach makes an attempt to destroy these stereotypical representations. In this regard, both approaches analyse the portrayal of females in nineteenth-century French fiction through social contexts.

5 Discussion

5. 1. Naturalism of *La Curée* by Emile Zola

Emile Zola belongs to those writers who in their literary work present the characters that are closely connected with their environment. In the novel *La Curée* Zola reflects female characters through social contexts, demonstrating the impact of the environment on them. Thus, the writer is more interested in the temperaments of his women rather than in other aspects of their personalities. Zola considers that female temperaments can explain their emotions and actions, their relations with other people and their attitudes to the world, in which they live. In *La Curée* female characters are greatly influenced by the events of the Second Empire and the changes that Baron Haussmann introduced in Paris. As a result of these changes, Zola's women are in search of pleasure and money. After the death of Aristide Rougon's wife, the character is left with two children and decides to marry a wealthy female Renée Beraud de Chatel, transforming his name into Aristide Saccard.

Their marriage provides Aristide with financial security, but this marriage of convenience proves to be unfortunate for the principal female character that is finally left without means of subsistence and a family. Renée loses her children during pregnancy and becomes engaged in various sexual intercours. At first she initiates the relations with Saccard's son, until he marries another wealthy but very ill woman Louise who dies soon after the marriage. Thus, Zola creates two male characters - a father and a son - who marry women with disabilities for money, because they do not have another way to enrich themselves. But Zola doesn't consider that these men are responsible for females' failure. Renée is portrayed as a woman who constantly suffers from neurotic attacks and devotes her life to balls, talks and sexual pleasures. Renée appears to be a product of French patriarchal society that puts a woman into a subordinate position, destroying her self and making her suffer from own weakness.

According to the feminist approach, such subjugation results in negative consequences for a woman, because she starts to substitute one extreme for another. In other words, a woman turns from excessive subordination to uncontrollable freedom. Before her marriage to Aristide, Renée gets pregnant and is abandoned by one of her lovers, and Aristide appears to be a rescue for woman's reputation. This female character is portrayed as a simple sensualist who finds real pleasure in social life and sexual relations. When she meets Aristide's son Maxime, a young teenager who greatly resembles her, she becomes his lover. Although the writer implicitly criticises Renée, he constantly points at the fact that it is French society that shapes this female who finally destroys not only herself, but also people around her. Renée is

against Maxime's marriage to Louise, considering her to be a weak and ugly girl. She is not able to realise the power of money for such people as Maxime and Aristide; she is used to spend much money and she regards it only as means that help her exist in French society. Renée is emotionally involved into the affairs with Maxime and she utilises this young person for her own pleasures. This female is amazed by these forbidden relations and doesn't want to think about the consequences of her action.

In the character of Renée, the writer embodies the essence of Parisian life; similar to Paris, Renée is obsessed with luxury and pleasures, but behind this gorgeous appearance there are degradation and suffering. This female character reflects reality of the nineteenth century when people run to certain extremes and were further destroyed by these extremes. Renée's wrong ideals are a result of her lack of appropriate education and social permissiveness that deprive a young woman of creating a normal family with loving husband and children. By the end of the narration Renée is completely destroyed by her obsession with pleasure; but Zola observes her weakness and foolishness through the social pressure that she is not able to withstand. As Zola puts it, she had slid down a slippery slope, yet she had not remained passive the whole way down. Desire had awakened in her too late to combat it, after the fall had become ineluctable.

The same regards the secondary female character of the novel - Angèle, the first wife of Aristide. She is also portrayed as a weak, passive and unhealthy female who is not able to endure life in Paris. Contrary to Renée, Angèle is not involved either in social life of Paris or in sexual relations because of her poverty and poor health, but her submissiveness is also formed by society, in <https://assignbuster.com/french-essays-nineteenth-century-french-fiction/>

which shelives. As Zola claims, To be poor in Paris is to be poor twice over. Angèle accepted misery with the passivity of the anemic woman she was. She spent her days either in the kitchen or lying on the floor playing with her daughter. Angèle is really devoted to her husband and children and refuses to be isolated from young Clotilde when Aristide decides to move to Paris. However, Paris, the city of changes in nineteenth century France, requires changes in individuals as well. Those people who fail to adjust to these changes are destroyed, that is just the case with Angèle.

Aristide's first wife appears too kind and weak, the features that do not allow her to survive in the cruel and degrading Parisian world; however, such characters as Mme Sidonie, a sister of Aristide, is aware of the role of money in Paris. Zola portrays this secondary character as a person who eliminates her emotions and instead applies to pure reason. When Sidonie visits a dying Angèle, she completely ignores any morality or decency in her talk with Aristide: She was a good woman, his sister continued, speaking as though Angèle were already dead. You can find women who are wealthier. Zola criticises such female scorn, implicitly demonstrating that Paris destroys the souls of women and makes them act, like machines, without any emotions and feelings. This realistic portrayal reflects the negative impact of certain social norms on individuals. Sidonie is used to interfere into the lives of other people and decide their fates. Therefore, in his representations of women Emile Zola stresses on the fact that power and wealth deprave females in France, but simultaneously he contrasts these mean women with such good females as Angèle and Céleste. As the writer describes, Céleste's devotion

pleased Renée all the more because she knew her to be honest and thrifty, a woman without a lover and untouched by vice.

5. 2. Misogyny in Germinie Lacerteux

Similar to Zola, Edmond and Jules de Goncourt in their literary work Germinie Lacerteux create the female characters that reflect the ideals of femininity existed in French society in the nineteenth century. Although their women reveal certain liberty, they are too preoccupied with their own sexuality. Through their female characters the Goncourt brothers reflect their misogynistic vision of females who are not able to suppress their sexual desires and who become the slaves of their natural instincts. Throughout the narration Edmond and Jules de Goncourt express their longing for eighteenth-century females with their refined appearances, exquisite manners and flirtation; they long for the period of strong aesthetic values and cultivated morality. Thus, their female characters are usually portrayed as depraved females who end tragically because of their weakness, poor education and lack of intelligence.

Germinie Lacerteux, the principal female character, is a woman who is sexually abused in early years and who is not able to marry when she comes to Paris. However, her motherly instincts are too powerful and she starts to look after a niece and another child Jupillon. But when Jupillon is transformed into a man, Germinie experiences a sudden passion towards him, and it is this passion that destroys her reputation and turns into poverty, because the love had been for the Jupillon young person only the satisfaction of a certain curiosity of the evil, seeking in the knowledge and in the possession of a

woman the right and the pleasure of scorning it. When Jupillon abandons Germinie, she starts drinking and is involved in numerous sexual intercourses that bring her to death, similar to Dumas' Marguerite and Zola's Renée. In this regard, Edmond and Jules de Goncourt uncover female passion that can gradually destroy a woman and depreciate her, criticising Germinie's uncontrollable sexual desires and instead maintaining the ideas of female virginity. As Jupillon tells Germinie during one of their talks, you appear yourself well still, you are not my heart, you are not my life, you are only my pleasure.

Contrary to other French writers of the nineteenth century that mainly portray females from the upper-class society, the principal female characters of Edmond and Jules de Goncourt belong to the middle-class. Such shift from aristocratic females to poor females reflects great realism of the narration, eliminating romanticism that is usually utilised in French novels. The Goncourts' naturalism explains the reasons of female sexuality and their further failure. According to the writers, it is really difficult for such a woman as Germinie to suppress her natural instincts and adhere to social morality that rejects any powerful emotions. Such females make attempts to change their conditions of living, but finally they appear in the similar conditions as at the initial stage of life. The Goncourts present this viewpoint not only on the example of Germinie, but also on the example of a secondary character Miss de Varandeuil, an old kind spinster who hires Germinie as a servant to her and who becomes fully attached to a young girl. As Edmond and Jules de Goncourt put it, This old woman is isolated and forgotten by death, only at the

end of her life, trailing her affections of tomb in tomb, had found her last friend in her servant.

However, such close relations between a master and a servant are not unusual for nineteenth-century French literature that usually reflects female servants as devoted and hardworking people who gradually occupy the principal place in the narration. Despite their different social positions, Germinie and Miss de Varandeuil finish their lives in loneliness, with the only difference that Germinie doesn't suppress her sexual desires, while Miss de Varandeuil isolates herself from the rest of the world, as well as from her powerful emotions. According to the social constructionist approach, a woman is created by society, in which she lives; thus, her sexual behaviour is also formed by the environment. In this regard, the differences in sexual desires of Germinie and Miss de Varandeuil can be explained by their different backgrounds and upbringing. Miss de Varandeuil is the representative of a broken aristocratic family that loses its fortune during the French Revolution, while Germinie comes from a middle-class society that adheres to easier manners.

5. 3. Realism of La Dame aux Camélias

The play of Dumas the younger *La Dame aux Camélias* portrays a beautiful prostitute Marguerite Gautier who breaks the relations with her lover, Armand Duval, to improve his reputation and soon dies of her incurable illness. In this female character the writer embodies his lover Marie Duplessis who died at the age of twenty-three. Dumas presents Marguerite as a romantic woman, despite the fact that her real life was not so romanticised. At the end of the

play Marguerite claims that she has lived for love and she doesn't hesitate to die for love. By applying to such tragic end, Dumas uncovers the social system of his times, when a woman from the middle-class couldn't be engaged in the relations with a male of the upper-class, or otherwise she could destroy his life and reputation.

On the example of this character Dumas the younger reflects woman's degradation, but Marguerite's death as a result of illness evokes sympathy towards her. Marguerite saves not only Armand, but also his sister who at last receives an opportunity to occupy an appropriate position in upper-class society. In this regard, a life of one female is sacrificed for the sake of another woman, although Marguerite is presented as an unusual female with many virtues. She is not only beautiful, but is also intelligent and noble. In the play Dumas the younger portrays Marguerite as a person with a slender figure, white face and dark hair. She has amazingly bright eyes, full lips and unusually white teeth. She possesses a good taste in her dresses, in music, in art and behaves in a noble way. But, above all, this courtesan has a big heart, expressing sympathy and understanding towards other people. As Dumas describes her, There was a kind of candour in this woman. You could see she was still in the virginity of vice. No wonder that Armand falls in love with Marguerite from the first sight; however, this popular French prostitute has never loved before she meets Armand. As Armand tells the truth about his feelings towards her, Marguerite laughs at him, but he gradually persuades her in his love, and she returns his affection. When Armand speaks with his father, he says, Perhaps I am in the wrong, but I can only be happy as long as I am the lover of this woman.

However, when Marguerite finds out that she is ill, she realises that her past has deprived her of future. Although noble people in nineteenth-century France were usually engaged in sexual relations with prostitutes, and these relations were regarded as natural, the situation was different in regard to love. The relations based on love were fully prohibited by upper-class society, and an aristocrat couldn't love or marry a prostitute, because such action would destroy him. Marguerite has no choice, but to destroy the relations with her lover in the most complex period of her life. Dumas the younger reveals that French aristocratic society creates certain social norms; those persons who try to oppose to them, are excluded from society. Thus, Marguerite appears to be a victim of these social norms, as she is engaged in illicit sexual relations with men. As these relations are concealed, they are ignored by society, but when they are exposed, they destroy the reputation of a person who belongs to the upper-class. Marguerite realises that her bad reputation threatens not only Armand, but his family as well, and she decides to break her relations with the only person she truly loves.

Such action demonstrates that Marguerite is better than females of the upper-class, because she understands her responsibility. Marguerite creates her own existence, but, as the writer puts it, Do not let us despise the woman who is neither mother, sister, maid, nor wife. Although this female character has never believed in love and has utilised males for her own benefits, the relations with Armand change her. Marguerite doesn't want to destroy Armand's life, as she has destroyed her own. As she tells him, your family would cast you off if you were to live with a woman like me. Let us be friends, good friends, but no more. Despite the fact that Marguerite takes this

serious decision because of her sincere love to Armand, Dumas the young simultaneously shows that she adheres to the demands of French society. Marguerite is used to act independently, but in this particular case she decides to reveal her subjection to society. In this regard, the writer proves that the principles of Libertinage that were established in France in the eighteenth century were attributed only to males, while females were punished for any display of independence.

In the case of Marguerite, this female is first punished for her illegal sexual intercourse and further – for her love to Armand, the representative of the upper-class. Throughout her life Marguerite has collided with many obstacles and has successfully overcome them. But she fails to defend her love against social prejudices. Contrasting Marguerite with females of the upper-class, Dumas the young uncovers the degradation of French society that rejects emotions and instead adheres to the failed morality. When Marguerite abandons Armand without any explanation, he constantly humiliates her during their meetings. As Marguerite feels that her illness progresses, she comes to Armand one more time and she can't suppress her desires. But Marguerite understands that she has to leave Armand who is unaware of true reasons behind her escape. As a result, Armand destroys Marguerite during the ball by publicly giving money to her. After such humiliation Marguerite loses her friends and clients and dies in poverty and loneliness. In prologue Marguerite's lover receives her letter and realises the true virtues of this beautiful and intelligent female. As Dumas claims, Marguerite was a pretty woman; but though the life of such women makes sensation enough, their death makes very little.

In real life Marie Duplessie greatly influenced Dumas the younger, but it is he who abandoned her, realising that he didn't have enough money to support this rich courtesan. However, as Dumas became more involved into the life of French society, he began to observe the social attitude towards courtesans and decided to reflect this attitude in his play *La Dame aux Camélias*.

Through the character of Marguerite the writer reveals his own opinion of a female. He portrays a beautiful and intelligent woman, providing her with many virtues and love, but simultaneously depriving her of the possibility to marry a person she loves because of her bad reputation. When after their prolonged parting Armand asks Marguerite, whether she is happy, she answers: Have I the face of a happy woman, Armand? Do not mock my sorrow, you, who know better than any one what its cause and its depth are. Thus, Dumas the younger implicitly demonstrates that ideal love relations can be established only between a virgin and a man with sexual experience.

At the same time Dumas regards close relations between opposite sexes as a battle. Although Marguerite has a kind heart and sincerely falls in love with Armand, she is not a virgin and is not able to fully belong to one man, with all her heart, body and soul. On the one hand, Dumas the younger reveals that a prostitute may be a better woman than a virgin, but, on the other hand, he rises against prostitution that transforms women into the subjects and deprives them of the possibility to become good mothers and wives.

According to the social constructionist approach, it was natural for a man of the nineteenth century to establish sexual relations with different women, but women had to adhere to strict social norms. In the play Dumas shows that the marriage with a prostitute is equated with a crime, but Marguerite

redeems her reputation. But such prostitutes, with a heart, were infrequent in Dumas' time, although some of his secondary female characters are also beautiful and intelligent. For instance, he introduces M de N. into his narration, a prostitute and an acquaintance of Marguerite. As the writer characterises her, the man who was the lover of such a woman might well be as proud as M. de N., and she was beautiful enough to inspire a passion. When Armand utilises her to revenge Marguerite, she reveals an unusual intelligence when she claims, you love Marguerite, and you want to have revenge upon her by becoming my lover. You don't deceive a woman like me, my dear friend.

5. 4. Ambiguity of *Le Spleen de Paris* by Baudelaire

Similar to Emile Zola, Baudelaire reveals his female characters through social environment; this is especially obvious in his collection of prose texts *Le Spleen de Paris*, where he shows an impact of Paris on women. When Baudelaire arrived to Paris, he had to live in various parts of the city, observing the life of women in these places. In the text *The Despair of the Old Woman*, the writer reflects his sympathy to an aged female who experiences great despair, as she sees a child and wants to smile at him, but the child is afraid of this old woman who doesn't have hair and teeth. This lonely woman is horrified by such attitude and she cries: Ah! For us, unhappy female old women, the age passed to like, even with the innocent ones, and we make horror with the little children that we want to like.

Baudelaire regards such women as victims of life who symbolise loneliness and misery. Applying to such horror portrayals, the poet implicitly criticises

those women who are obsessed with their material well-being, ignoring the reality and the beauty of the world around them. In *Le Spleen de Paris* Baudelaire draws a parallel between one woman and another, as well as between a man and a woman. In the text *The Wild Woman and the Small Mistress* the poet presents a dialogue between two females, uncovering their views on life. Though both persons belong to one sex, they are different, as the wild woman describes a mistress, you which rest only on fabrics as soft as your skin, which eat only cooked meat, and for which a skilful servant takes care to cut out the pieces. Such portrayal reveals the poet's double vision, his attempts to evaluate various sides of people's consciousness.

But Baudelaire is especially sympathetic to widows and old females who are forgotten and neglected by society. In his text *Widows* the poet provides a detailed portrayal of widows in the parks, claiming that it is easy to recognize them, because each widow reflects loneliness, pain and isolation.

Baudelaire intensifies their misery by contrasting these lonely and poor widows with wealthy and idle people who walk in the park: It is always something interesting that this reflection of the joy of the rich person at the retina of poor. These reflections show the ability of Baudelaire for observations and his understanding of a female essence. In his text *Beautiful Dorothee* the poet describes a beautiful Dorothee strong and proud like the sun who walks along the street, bare-footed, and smiles. Perhaps, Baudelaire ponders, she goes to a young officer to talk with him, that's why she is so delighted. Such is the image that the girl creates for the rest of the world, but no one knows that she gathers each piaster to redeem her little sister. In another prose poem *Which is the true one* Baudelaire reveals

the story of a beautiful and unusual girl Bénédicta who is portrayed by the poet as ideal. But as he claims, this miraculous girl was too beautiful to live a long time and she dies very young. Baudelaire realises that female beauty and youth are temporary, and many good women die at an early age.

In the text *Portraits of Mistresses* the poet describes four males who talk about their mistresses, implicitly uncovering their inability to accept female independence. According to the feminist approach, female characters are usually portrayed from two different perspectives: either as chaste wives, if they adhere to the standards of patriarchal society, or as mistresses, if they reject social rules and stereotypes. However, in *La Spleen de Paris* Baudelaire reveals that such attitude is also aggravated by class and economic differences.

6 Conclusions

The dissertation has analysed the representations of women in *La Curée* by Zola, *Germinie Lacerteux* by Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, *La Dame aux Camélias* by Dumas and *Le Spleen de Paris* by Baudelaire. In these works the portrayal of females reflects complex social stereotypes and norms existed in French society. In the play *La Dame aux Camélias* Dumas the younger reveals that French aristocracy was engaged in sexual relations with courtesans, but, as these relations became a threat to their reputation, they destroyed any intercourse with their lovers. On the example of the principal female character - the prostitute Marguerite Gautier - the writer demonstrates that a woman of a low social position with a reputation of a prostitute has no chances for better future, even if she possesses many

virtues and beauty. Although Marguerite sincerely falls in love with Armand Duval, she realises that their relations destroy not only Armand, but his family as well. Suffering from an incurable illness, Marguerite nevertheless decides to abandon her lover for his sake. Thus, Dumas the younger proves that independent and intelligent females collide with many restrictions and stereotypes in a patriarchal world. The libertine ideas that were proclaimed throughout France in the eighteenth century were mainly maintained by males, while women continued to occupy an inferior position to men. Such female oppression was aggravated by social biases of the upper-class towards people of the middle-class, the biases that were mainly based on economical differences between two classes.

In *Germinie Lacerteux* Edmond and Jules de Goncourt provide a misogynistic vision of females, trying to prove that women are too preoccupied with sexuality and social position. Similar to Dumas' Marguerite, the Goncourts' principal female character also belongs to the middle-class society and who is destroyed by her passion for a young male. Following the principles of naturalism, the Goncourts observe a female from biological and social perspectives. Emile Zola goes further; in his novel *La Curée* the writer reveals that social environments shape