

LA « DOUCEUR ET L'AMERTUME » DU SILENCE : POUR UNE
RHÉTORIQUE DE L'INDISTINCT DANS LE PREMIER CHAPITRE DE
LA FORTUNE DES ROUGON

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes the first chapter of *La Fortune des Rougon* by E. Zola focusing in particular on two contrasting features which underpin the dynamics of the novel: order versus disorder and silence versus noise. Moving from the assumption that the transition area between the two antithetic poles intrinsically characterizes the author's work (a trait particularly significant in this novel), the main purpose of this study is to highlight how literary depth is achieved precisely through the inter-play of these opposing poles. By reporting instances of confusion and assimilation, both visual and auditory, shaped in turn by the narrator's and the characters' view-points, this study portrays a « rhetoric of uncertainty » aimed at construing the narrative texture of an « entre-deux » (a « limbo zone »), without deleting the antithetical component intrinsically shaping the novel. The final section of the paper handles the « entre-deux » concept from a more general perspective, analyzing it as a key topos both in linguistic and literary research.