FRENCH SOCIAL AND POLITICAL HISTORY, 1851-1901, REVEALED IN THE NOVELS OF EMILE ZOLA

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Elaine Lantta Beardslee

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FRENCH SOCIAL AND POLITICAL HISTORY, 1851-1901, REVEALED IN THE NOVELS OF EMILE ZOLA

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

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I. Introduction

The novel as a valuable adjunct to the study of political, social, and economic history has been inadequately utilized by students of history. This has been unfortunate, for the novel as a literary instrument possesses certain unique features which enable it to reveal accurately the spirit of a particular age. Other literary forms are restricted in numerous ways and consequently are unable to present the panorama of life as completely and colorfully as the novel can.

The methods by which social and intellectual atmosphere is presented in the novel vary according to the novelist's personal tastes. There are of course many prose techniques available to all novelists including narration, analysis, author or character comment, pure description, and dialogue, most of which are used at one time or another in any novel. Besides the various methods of presentation of his ideas, the novelist is also at an advantage in that he is working with a loose form which permits any number of setting, characters, and varieties of action. There is no restriction of the length of the novel, for it is rarely read at one sitting. This absence of restriction on length permits the writer to encompass a long period of years or only a short time in his story. When the novel does extend over a long period of years, the novelist can exhibit gradual growth of character and development of personality taking place in a definite social atmosphere. This historical atmosphere can be achieved by overt methods of portraying the dress of

people, their manners, their literary and entertainment tastes, their conversations on issues of the time. Or it can be revealed indirectly, for often the absence of any direct reference to certain ideas or the emphasis of particular attitudes in preference to others shows how people were thinking at a particular time.

The novelist, no matter how empirical he endeavors to be, cannot escape looking at the world through a set background of certain religious, political, and social ideas. He may express his own ideas through analytical comment or through the more subtle means of emphasizing thoughts or actions which concur with his own. He may have the characters discourse on his own and conflicting ideas. Regardless of the technique of a particular author, in the final essence, all writers create a world in story form which is a representation of the real world. The finished novel is then a personal direct impression of life; therefore, whether or not the reader agrees with the completed picture, it is significant in revealing how one or a number of people did think, feel, and act at a certain time in history. This adaptability of the novel for telling a story taking place in a definite milieu renders it a natural device for revealing the history of the times.

The student of history who decides to use novels as a supplementary source in his study must be discerning in his selection and cautious in his treatment. First, of course, the student should be familiar with the general historical period with which the novel deals. At all times some consideration of the author as a person must be made, for the student should be able to detect those attitudes in the novel which are the author's own and those which belong to the characters. The

student must recognize the particular biases an author may have in order to evaluate their importance in relation to the weight the author gives them. Finally the student should not accept the novel as a final source for historical study. He must always remember that the novelist by intention is first an author dealing with fictitious material and only secondarily and indirectly a social historian. The novelist as an artist deals with contemporary material which may and most often has to be revised and adapted to fit his story, which after all is the main purpose of a novel.

Not all novels, but an astounding number may be used as valuable historical aids. Many, including some of the category highly advertised as "historical novels" are nothing more than romances, which at the height of their success, may form the basis for inferior Hollywood pictures. The better ones, however, do act as a legitimate source for gaining historical insight into specific periods and frequently incite the reader to further study of the period narrated. One such work is Hawthorne's Scarlet Letter which probably depicts the moral austerity of New England Puritan life more impressively than any number of documentary works on the same subject. The book as well as displaying the external life of the Puritans probes into the spiritual foundations and religious atmosphere of Puritanism, while at the same time revealing Hawthorne's mental attitude toward the New England heritage.

Balzac's Human Comedy was envisioned to paint the picture of all of French society in the first half of the nineteenth century. Almost any one of the novels in this gigantic series is another example of the type of novel which reveals social manners. In Père Goriot we see a

young lad from the provinces finding his place in Paris. The devastating effect of the city life on the country person is revealed in a manner which shows the author's intense feelings on the social relationship of the French city, particularly Paris, to the individual. The Russian writers, Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, Turgenev, have shown a unique capacity for revealing in literature the social, religious, and political life of nineteenth century Russia. Anyone of Dostoyevsky's novels, The Brothers Karamazov or Crime and Punishment, despite the author's personal interest in studying the human soul, is invaluable in portraying the social temper of the period as well as the author's philosophy. Likewise, Anna Karenina, primarily the story of a woman's passions, at the same time is artistic in its display of the social life of higher levels of Russian society. Turgenev's Fathers and Children is another example of the searching of contemporary life, in this case the study of an intellectual movement, nihilism.

Charles Dickens' novels of social protest in early nineteenth-century England, the work houses in Oliver Twist, the debtor's problems in David Copperfield; Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice; Victor Hugo's Les Miserables; Margaret Mitchell's moving story of southern society in the Civil War, Gone with the Wind, are only a few of the innumerable examples in the literature of the world which reflect the ideas of their times. The contemporary novel has shown a tendency to probe social issues and current philosophies: the harsh life of the southern sharecropper intertwined with the problems of land tenure and conservation and the eternal problem of human rights in John Steinbeck's The Grapes of Wrath;

revolutionary China in the late 1920's in André Malraux's Man's Fate; a grappling with one of the vital philosophies of today, communism, in Arthur Koestler's Darkness at Noon.

As the above examples illustrate, there are as many types of novels, romantic, realistic, stream-of-consciousness, the so-called naturalistic, sociological, as there are approaches to life. The so-called naturalistic novel attempts a scientific investigation of the facts of life and should therefore be highly suitable for a survey of social and political history. Other types of novels may also be valuable in the study of history, but the "naturalistic" novel was the first which consciously attempted to picture life as it appeared. French authors were among the first to make extended use of this type of novel, and a study of the naturalistic novel in France should reveal historical atmosphere in that country. I have chosen to study the work of Emile Zola as an addition to historical knowledge of France for various reasons. Zola has been considered by many to be the leader as well as the most representative member of the naturalistic writers. The quantity of his literary work, the diverse subject matter, as well as the availability of his work in translation to the American student all contribute to making a study of his works as one approach to a survey of French political and social history in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

There have been many misunderstandings of the naturalistic novel as conceived by the French writers as well as by writers of other countries. A large amount of hostility toward the novels of Zola, the Goncourt brothers, De Maupassant, and Alphonse Daudet resulted in part because of misunderstandings of readers as to the purposes of this type of novel.

It was thought that these novelists deliberately drew on unpleasant subjects with an ulterior motive of making their works as pessimistic and sordid as possible. The writers themselves considered their work pessimistic only insofaras the society around them was depressing; optimistic in that they hoped the portrayal of the sores of society would hasten reform. An article in the Atlantic Monthly illustrates one critical attitude toward the French naturalists:

> Only it is to be feared that with their close Chinese life, their tendency to study the warts rather than the beauties of man, their neglect of large classes of contemporary life, and above all their absorbing care for form, the modern French novelists are not getting hold of that large humanity which is alone eternally interesting. [1]

Another critical view held by many was that only a very select mature audience could read the French novels, for while they might have a serious purpose, in the final event they were dangerous. This opinion is illustrated in an editorial article of the Literary World:

> ...The danger is that, like the bottle of carbolic acid whose contents got by mistake into a boy's stomach near Boston the other day, and killed him, such books will fall into the hands of readers to whom they will prove poison and death. If books could be prescribed by authority, and taken in doses under regulation like other powerful agents, the dangerous among them could be circulated with far greater safety. [2]

Among the serious students of literature, there are varied interpretations of naturalism. William Nitze and E. Preston Dargan consider

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[1] Anon., Selection in "The Contributors Club," the Atlantic Monthly, Vol. 53 (May, 1884), p. 727.

[2] Anon., "Concord Philosophy and Zola," the Literary World, Vol. 17 (August 7, 1886), p. 264.

it an excessive form of realism possessing the following characteristics:

First, it allows a still larger variety of subjects, emphasizing the lower and coarser forms of life; it presents this material in a fashion which is often revolting ... it magnifies the study of the industries and seeks to apply to fiction the processes of the natural sciences; from these, taken in their application to heredity and environment, it draws its conception of life - deterministic, fatalistic, essentially pessimistic.[3]

The renowned English critic of French letters, George Saintsbury, considers the aims of the naturalists twofold: first, "exact and almost photographic delineation of the accidents of modern life" and second "uncompromising non-suppression of the essential features and functions of that life which are usually supressed."[4] A more recent analysis of naturalism, nevertheless akin to the above comments, is seen in Jean-Albert Bédé's article in the Columbia Dictionary of Modern European Literature which seeks to discuss naturalism in negative terms:

It is a revolt - a bourgeois revolt, by the way, long immune from any trace of Marxism - against the bourgeoisie as it had emerged from half a century of growing prosperity, as it was going to appear at the time of the Dreyfus affair, dull and self-seeking, vain and hypocritical, full of these ready-made ideas which Flaubert had so mercilessly satirized, socially conservative and reactionary in politics. ...Against this ... naturalism hurls itself, a minority movement, ... curiously conscious, because of this fact, of its affinities with other "vanguard" manifestations, such as positivism in philosophy, Darwinian or Spencerian evolutionism in science, symbolism in poetry, realism or impressionism in the fine arts. ...[5]

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[3]William A. Nitze and E. Preston Dargan, A History of French Literature (New York, 1922), p. 623.

[4]George Saintsbury, French Literature and its Masters, edited by Huntington Cairns (New York, 1946), p. 297.

[5]Jean Albert Bédé, "French Naturalism," Columbia Dictionary of Modern European Literature, Horatio Smith, General Editor, (New York, 1947), p. 290.

Zola's primary theories on the novel are found in his essay, The Experimental Novel in which he borrowed heavily from the book of the famed French physician, Claude Bernard, Introduction à l'étude de la médicine expérimentale. Zola felt that the experimental method of the physician could also be applied by the literary artist. As the doctor employs the method in his science, so could the artist employ it in his study of life. By showing man's social action under various environments and under the influence of heredity, the novelist would be able to find the best social condition for man. In such a way he could construct a practical sociology which would be a valuable aid to the political and economic sciences.[6] The novelist is both an observer and an experimenter; the observer finds the facts and the experimentalist arranges them for his story. Throughout the essay, the importance of the scientific attitude for the writer is emphasized:

> In one word, we should operate on the characters, the passions, on the human and social data, in the same way that the chemist and the physicist operate on inanimate beings, and as the physiologist operates on living begins. ...It is scientific investigation, it is experimental reasoning, which combats one by one the hypotheses of the idealists, and which replaces purely imaginary novels by novels of observation and experiment.[7]

Heredity and environment are two of the main influences acting upon man which the novelist must portray in his novels. While the novelist should aim at picturing society just as it is, he is at some liberty to bring in these influences and to show their effect upon man in society.

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[6]Emile Zola, The Experimental Novel and Other Essays, translated by Belle M. Sherman (New York, 1893), pp. 25-26.

[7]Ibid., p. 18.

The task of the novelist in portraying the evils of society to all the world is a noble one for in so doing he opens the way for legislators and informed people to correct the maladies in society:

> ...To be master of good and evil, to regulate society, to solve in time all the problems of socialism, above all, to give justice a solid foundation by solving through experiment the questions of criminality — is not this being the most useful and the most moral workers in the human workshop? [8]

Despite the criticism of "pessimistic" made upon the naturalists, as Bédé affirms, they actually were optimistic:

> Yet the depressingly materialist atmosphere of this type of novel ... should not hide the fact that it conveys a broadly humanitarian message. It has a political, democratic tinge - one is reminded of Zola's pronouncement, "The Republic will be naturalist, or it will not be"; it is optimistic, yes, optimistic as it reveals an almost childish confidence in the possibility of immediate reform and progress. [9]

The important part of Zola's life and his ideas are a personification of the Third Republic and its indomitable faith in science, evolution, positivism, and materialism. [10] Born on April 2, 1840, of a father part Italian and part Greek, and of a French mother, Zola's early years until the age of eighteen were spent at Aix. His formal education here consisted of training at the Collège Bourbon in Aix, the main influence of which seems to have been the beginning of his friendship with the future artist, Paul Cézanne. After his arrival in Paris in 1858 with his mother, he attended the Lycée St. Louis where he

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[8] Ibid., p. 26.

[9] Bédé, op. cit., p. 289.

[10] This general biographical information on Zola is obtained from Matthew Josephson, Zola and His Time (New York, 1928).

apparently was not an exceptional student but was a devout reader of romantic literature. Until he began work at Hachette's Publishing House in 1862, his years in Paris had been spent in the Latin Quarter, writing unsuccessfully. His first publication, a group of short stories, Contes à Ninon, written in the romantic vein, appeared in 1864.

This publication created no immediate success, and for the next three years, Zola was occupied in studying Balzac and Flaubert, writing as a literary critic for Parisian newspapers, and forming a circle of friends including many young painters, Edouard Manet, Claude Monet, Renoir. The experimental work in physiology by Dr. Claude Bernard and the work in philosophy and literature by Hippolyte Taine symbolized in his statement "Vice and Virtue are (chemical) products like sugar and vitriol" inspired the young writer to begin a study of a family under the Second Empire, picturing their life in totality and showing the effects of heredity and environment upon a number of individuals living in a definite social atmosphere. This group of some twenty novels entitled the "Rougon-Macquart" series saw its first novel, La Fortune des Rougon, published in 1871 and the final novel, Le Docteur Pascal in 1893. The series as a whole was enormously successful if one may judge by the sale of the works and their rapid translation into many tongues. There was criticism over the author's technique and literary methods including such comments as "a pessimist epic of human animalism" [11] but most critics seems to agree with the statement of Henry James on the series:

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[11] Jules Lemaître, Literary Impressions (London, 1921), translated by A. W. Evans, p. 153.

No finer act of courage and confidence, I think, is recorded in the history of letters. The critic in sympathy with him returns again and again to the great wonder of it, in which something so strange is mixed with something so august ... the high project, the work of a lifetime, announces beforehand its inevitable weakness and yet speaks in the same voice for its admirable, its almost unimaginable strength.[12]

These novels of the Rougon-Macquart series show various phases of life during the Second Empire - the mines, the railways, the peasantry, the large shops of Paris, the markets of Paris, various levels of society. While each novel may be read separately, they are united by the heredity factor which Zola studies throughout the group. This interest of Zola in heredity had previously been shown in two earlier novels, Thérèse Raquin and Madeleine Férat.

The later works of Zola, the 'Triology of the Three Cities' - Lourdes, Rome, and Paris were symbolical of Faith, Hope, and Charity, and as a unit personify the struggles of Man between Religion (in this instance, the Roman Catholic Church) and Reason and Life. The last novels Zola planned were to embody his principles of human life: Fruitfulness, Work, Truth, and Justice. The latter of these, Justice, which was to deal with the idea of universal peace was never finished due to Zola's untimely death in 1902. Truth was to be a fictional story involving the primary elements of the Dreyfus Affair. Had Zola been unknown for his literary merit, his role in the Dreyfus affair alone would have reserved a place for him in history, not to be disputed even by his harshest literary critics. In 1898 his letter J'accuse declaring the innocence of Dreyfus and accusing the military authorities for concealing the real criminal was published in Clemenceau's paper Aurore. Dreyfus was declared guilty in the first trial and Zola himself was

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[12] Henry James, The Art of Fiction and Other Essays (New York, 1948), p. 157.

convicted of libeling the military authorities. He was sentenced to a year of imprisonment but exiled himself to England, returning to France again in 1899. The justice Zola had so eagerly sought in the affair was not meted until 1906, but Zola meanwhile had been found dead in his bedroom in 1902, a victim of asphyxiation. Anatole France, in an oration at the grave of Zola paid his tribute to the man who had become his friend during the Dreyfus affair:

...He sought to divine and to foresee a better society. This sincere realist was an ardent idealist.
...He has honored his country and the world through an immense work and through a great action. Envy him his destiny and his heart, which made his lot that of the greatest: he was a moment of the conscience of mankind.[13]

Although Zola had never been admitted to the French Academy, his remains were transferred to the Pantheon in 1908 and in this posthumous gesture France seemed to pay tribute to one of her sons.

As a man, Zola was highly regarded by his friends, and as a literary worker his sincerity of purpose was not doubted even by his strongest critics. All of his life would have been quite peaceful had he not become involved in the Dreyfus Affair. As a man of ideas, he like many others, personified the faith of the Third Republic. His optimistic belief in science is illustrated in his own words in a passage in a "Letter to the Young People of France":

We are the true patriots - we who wish to see France scientific, rid of lyrical declamations, strengthened by the culture of truth, applying the scientific formula in all things, in politics as in literature, in social economy as in the art of war.[14]

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[13] Josephson, op. cit., pp. 509-10.

[14] Emile Zola, "A Letter to the Young People of France" included in The Experimental Novel and Other Essays, op. cit., pp. 100-1.

In the latter part of the nineteenth century there was a reaction against naturalism, the downfall of it being attributed by one student of literature, Denis Saurat, to the failure of scientific materialism itself.[15] Despite this temporary reaction to naturalism, the influence of Zola has extended both in France and abroad to an extent unknown to most French writers. One of the major contributions he made to novel writing was the belief that the whole area of modern life may serve as material for the novelist. John Galsworthy, the American "naturalists" Frank Norris and Stephen Crane, Sinclair Lewis, and the proletarian and sociological novelists of today are only a few of the literary artists indebted to the experimental work of Emile Zola.

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[15] Denis Saurat, Modern French Literature (New York, 1946), p. 34.

II. A Brief Historical Survey of the Years Covered by Zola's Novels

The period of years encompassed by the novels of Emile Zola covers approximately a half century, 1851-1901. Within these years there were a number of significant developments in French history, not only in the realm of politics but in the social and intellectual spheres as well. The social and cultural tendencies of a particular nation may be similar to such tendencies predominant in other nations at the same time, but in the field of politics, more often the incidents are related to a particular country. Such was the case in France of the latter half of the nineteenth century, a period in which a number of dates important primarily to French history occur: 1851, the dying year of the Second Republic; 1852, the birth of the Second Empire; 1871, the death of the Empire and the revival of Republican France, officially recognized in 1875 with the passage of the Constitutional Laws.

The year 1851 - a coup d'état - and France awoke to find another Napoleon in control. The homage France had paid in myth since 1815 to the first Napoleon was now to be realized in actuality to his nephew, Louis Napoleon III. [1] Born in 1808, the son of Louis Bonaparte, King of Holland and Hortense-Eugénie, daughter of Josephine, this Napoleon hardly seemed French except for the fact that he was born

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[1] This general information on Louis Napoleon is obtained from Philip Guedella, The Second Empire (New York, 1922).

in Paris. Until his achievement of power Louis Napoleon had spent his youth traveling on the continent and in England. After partaking in the Italian revolutions of 1830-31, he further publicized the name of Bonaparte by writing various political and military pamphlets. Two unsuccessful military attempts to recapture France were made in 1836 and 1840, the latter resulting in his imprisonment at the fortress of Ham. Although Louis Napoleon had not yet achieved power, as Philip Guedella states, it was becoming increasingly difficult for the government of Louis Philippe to censor the romantic appeal of the Man of Destiny to the French nation.[2]

After escaping from Ham, Napoleon arrived in France after the bourgeois revolution of 1848 which had declared France a Republic and which called for a president to be elected on terms of manhood suffrage. Although elected by four Departments to be a member of the National Assembly, he did not take his seat until September at which time he announced his candidacy for the presidential election. An overwhelming vote gave him this office, but he found himself without a majority in the Assembly. Desirous of perpetuating his power, Napoleon directed a coup d'état for December 1, 1851, which resulted in the dissolving of the Assembly and the submitting of a new constitution providing a ten-year presidential term to the people. When on December 20, 1851, this constitution was voted upon affirmatively by the French people, the Empire was not far distant. Indeed, before its official proclamation on December 2, 1852, France was already

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[2]Guedella, op. cit., p. 110.

The Crédit Mobilier serving investment banking and the Crédit Foncier serving real estate interests were evidences of the growing influence of capital in the business world. With the aid of such resources the French railway system was carried to completion during these years. New financial enterprises were also attended with speculation, and as Flathe observes, an entirely new group of adventurers developed, "consisting of speculators, wire-pullers, and the like, suddenly arrived at wealth, who shared among themselves the spoils of the coup d'état." [5] The capital city itself was being transformed under the direction of Baron Hausmann, spacious avenues replacing the narrow streets of barricade days. The commercial and industrial development of the Empire caused a further increase in numbers and influence of the working classes which had already exerted their importance in the July Monarchy and particularly in the June days of 1848.

The expositions of the Empire displayed its industrial progress to all of the world. In 1867, when the Empire was already on its downward trend, another Paris Exposition seemed to bring back for a moment the splendour of its early years. Paris and the Empire were hosts to all the royalty of Europe, and one June afternoon, the Emperor and several royal guests watched a troop review:

> ...The little brass guns went clanking past behind their gun-teams, and the Emperor sat in the sunshine with his great moustache between the tall Czar and the narrow eyes of Prussia. ...The troops marched off through the June dust, and the Longchamps had seen in the blaze and jingle of the great review the Indian summer of the Empire. [6]

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[5] Ibid., p. 107.

[6] Guedella, op. cit., p. 374.

The early years of the Empire had been successful both on the domestic and foreign scenes: the expositions revealing the material prosperity of the rule of the Bonapartist, and the autocratic silencing of any political dissatisfaction displaying on the surface a France well-pleased with her Man of Destiny. French participation in the Crimean War of 1854-6, despite heavy losses, seemed glorious for here was a fighting France; here was compensation for the losses in Russia of the first Napoleon; here was France protecting the historic rights of the Roman Catholics in Turkey; here was the first major move of the Empire to enhance its prestige in continental affairs. The second major undertaking, French aid to the Italian states, was not so glorious. The venture proved ill-fated for Louis Napoleon found himself in the distressful position of alienating the French Catholics, who formerly had been among his most faithful supporters, by aiding the Italian states in their fight against the papal power. He also alienated the Italian patriots who felt that they were being betrayed by this "so-called lover of self-determination" who abandoned them before the task was finished. French imperial activity fared somewhat better; the African and Far Eastern undertakings, to be completed under the Third Republic, now received their start. One of these ventures in the Western Hemisphere, the Mexican Expedition, was, however, a fiasco. After establishing in a temporary successful manner, Maximilian, brother of Franz Joseph of Austria, on the Mexican throne, the Emperor deserted him at the time the United States refused recognition of the new kingdom and left his protegé to the mercy of the irate Mexicans.

This was 1867, and the Emperor being occupied with European affairs was unable to give much further thought to the Mexican kingdom. When Napoleon had sat with the King of Prussia and the Czar of Russia viewing the 1867 exhibition, he hardly realized that on one side was the representative of the new master of Europe who had shortly put an end to Austria and would soon settle with the Second Empire. Otto Eduard Leopold von Bismarck-Schönhausen - an impressive title which appeared not to impress Louis Napoleon until too late. It is ironical that Napoleon the Third's dreams of national unification for all people, when carried to their ultimate by the Iron Chancellor, were to mean his political death. The Franco-Prussian war, ostensibly a result of the controversy over the accession to the Spanish throne, was actually another logical step in Bismarck's plans for the unification of Germany. After gaining control over Schleswig-Holstein in 1863-4 and Austria after the lightning effect of Sadowa in 1866, only France remained an obstacle in the German march. The German military machine under the leadership of the war minister, Von Roon, and the great general Von Moltke, had already dazzled Europe, but its full impact was not to be felt until the defeat of France. After diplomatic efforts failed to solve the controversy, the German army marched into Alsace in August of 1870; by the end of the month Napoleon with McMahon had surrendered at Sedan. Moltke proceeded to march to Paris where extraordinary resistance was being manifested by the Parisians and where Gambetta, later to figure so prominently in the Third Republic, was endeavouring to subscribe provincial help for the capital city. In the meantime Marshal Bazaine who was blocked in Metz had surrendered to Bismarck,

thereby relieving the German troops surrounding Metz. Within a matter of months, France was on her knees before the superior German military machine, and on May 10, 1871, the Treaty of Frankfurt was signed.

On January 18, 1871, in the palace at Versailles, the German Empire was officially proclaimed; as one Empire rose in fame, so another died in infamy. France had been compelled to give up Alsace-Lorraine, and her grief at this loss and subsequent desire to revenge it were to be constant factors in the Third Republic; sometimes playing a dynamic role in French politics when sponsored by nationalist organizations such as the League of Patriots; more often remaining a mere undercurrent of patriotism for all good Frenchmen. Yet this feeling of revenge remained prominent enough so that it could achieve its proper place in the foreground when the war of 1914 broke out. Out of the ruins of the Second Empire a new republic, which was as disturbed by the old Empire and Napoleon as it was humiliated by the Fall of France, was to arise. The lessons of the new republic were to come not so much from its antecedent as from the conqueror. A strong Germany united under Prussian leadership had shortly dominated all of central Europe and was now the continental power of late nineteenth century Europe. Its victory appeared to have resulted from the use of force and science, and the Third Republic was soon to adopt similar mass armies, general state education, and a superb devotion to science.

The Republic was not an abrupt change for the last years of the Empire had shown a growing tendency toward liberalization. Beginning in 1860 numerous changes were being effected; chamber debates were

published in full, and the chambers were permitted to discuss and vote upon throne addresses. In 1863 the opposition which only a few years before had consisted of some five members had risen to thirty-two deputies, a majority of whom were Republicans who would figure prominently in the Third Republic - Jules Favre, Jules Simon, Adolphe Thiers. Just before the fatal year of 1870 the last imperial prime minister Rouher had been replaced by Emile Ollivier:

> New men, new names, new nations seemed to come crowding on the scene, and the stiff outlines of autocracy were melting in the rebirth of the Empire libéral into the simpler, younger form of a modern monarchy. One could see, like shadows on the blind of a lighted room, the Emperor's tired, gracious gesture of surrender and M. Ollivier standing erect to take up, in the name of France, the burden of the Empire. [7]

Despite these growing signs of liberalization in the Second Empire, the liberal Republic was not immediately considered to be the Saviour of France. [8] The Assembly which had set itself up at Bordeaux in 1871 had accepted the Republic as a temporary necessity, but its membership came chiefly from monarchist groups who later would accept the Republic not so much because of a fondness for it but rather because of their failure to agree on a monarchical candidate to head France. Early in 1871, another group, this time from the left, confronted the Republic. The dissatisfactions of the working classes were manifested in the uprisings of the Paris commune whose quelching

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[7] Ibid., p. 397.

[8] This general information on the Third Republic in the remaining pages of this chapter may be found in any of the histories of the period. Among those I have used are: Baron Pierre de Coubertin, The Evolution of France under the Third Republic, translated by Isabel F. Hapgood (New York, 1897); Emile Bourgeois, History of Modern France, Volume II, 1852-1913, (London, 1922); D. W. Brogan, France under the Republic (New York, n.d.). Specific quotations are paginated.

was one of the first tasks of the old statesman Adolphe Thiers as first president of the new Republic.

In one aspect the Second Empire adopts itself more readily to a brief survey, for in the empire, one central figure dominates the scene whereas in the Republic countless personalities can be observed, Thiers, Gambetta, MacMahon, Jules Simon, Alfred Dreyfus, General Boulanger. The personnel of both governments was in the main bourgeois, for in the Republic the working classes had not yet assumed high governmental positions. The economic prosperity of France which had surged during the Empire continued into the Republic. There is probably no better manifestation of it than to witness the rapidity with which the war indemnity of one billion dollars was paid to Germany in three years. By 1872 the consumption of coal had risen to 23,000,000 tons; the production of smelting works to a million tons; the sugar trade was growing; the general activity of the merchant marine, ports, and railways greatly increased.[9] As the expositions of the Empire had served their purpose, so the Exposition of 1878 furnished dazzling proof of the rapid recovery of France since the war. The material prosperity of the republic, like the empire, was not achieved without speculation, and the Panama Canal scandals and trials in the eighties were a match for any of the frauds of the Empire.

Mere political changes do not kill the growth of ideas. The impact of socialism is the manifestation of only one of the ideas continued from its natural course under the Second Empire. Gradually socialists who had

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[9]Bourgeois, op. cit., pp. 229-30.

lost power at the time of the commune were again asserting influence in French workingmen's circle, and French representatives could again be found in the congresses meeting at Vienna, Philadelphia, and Paris. Exceptional leaders were found in men like Jules Guesde, Jean Jaurès, Alexandre Millerand. Disagreement within socialist ranks prohibited the formation of a united socialist party, thereby resulting in various socialist factions in France, two prominent ones being the Marxist group under Guesde, and the anti-Marxists or Workers' Revolutionary Socialist Party. A split within the anti-Marxists occurred in 1890 at which time the Allemanist group set forth a strict class doctrine maintaining that only the workers could liberate the workers; their leaders must be leaders who knew the worker's lot at first hand, not "bourgeois on the make, or even bourgeois sentimentally affected by woes they had not experienced."[10] Generally significant in the French socialist movement were its insistence on separation of working movements from politics, its militant spirit, its emphasis on worker control, and often its tendencies toward anarchism.

One of the major problems facing the Republic was the reorganization of the army. The Republic which felt it appropriate to curb the power of the military in politics at the same time considered a strong army a pre-requisite if France were not to suffer another Sedan. Universal military service with a five-year period of service was passed, and various requests to reduce the period to three years failed until 1889. The continual fear in France of an unhealthy military influence in government was recognized by the Boulanger crisis. General Boulanger,

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[10]Brogan, op. cit., p. 296.

an unknown, suddenly seized the public eye in the eighties, and with varying support from Paul Déroulède's League of Patriots, the radicals, royalists, the church, he eventually sat in the Assembly and even became minister of war. Whether Boulanger was a real threat to the democratic Republic is not known, but it can be affirmatively stated that he served notice to the Republic that the army could still be a dangerous usurper in the sphere of politics, and to Germany a reminder that colorful military men might be able to capitalize on "revenge". The episode further showed the dissatisfaction of many groups, apparently not at all similar, with the Republic. The failure of either the right or left to unite behind the blond general, the fact that France had known too many coup d'états and their subsequent results, and the recognition of "revenge" as a living idea but not a very practical one were all contributory to the downfall of Boulangism.[11]

The educational changes in the Third Republic were one manifestation of the whole movement of science and are inextricably associated with the role of the church in French affairs. The main characteristics of the new education were its extensiveness, its separation from the church, and its emphasis on nationalism. By the various laws passed in the eighties, the church for all practical purposes had lost control over the majority of French education. Education for the elementary-age students became compulsory as well as free in the public primary schools. Each village or town was required to maintain a public

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[11]William Curt Buthman, The Rise of Integral Nationalism in France (New York, 1939), pp. 23-40, passim.

primary school. The main objection of the Church was to the abolition of religious training in the schools. While the Church still controlled much of secondary education, the state education probably reached a greater number of Frenchmen who were only able to go through the lower grades. In 1880 Jules Ferry, the educational minister, succeeded in closing the Jesuit schools although 200 Catholic lay-officers resigned in protest. The educational changes also included more advantages than previously for women students. More libraries and laboratories were being built; and technical and farm schools were founded to aid in the promotion of new methods for agriculture.[12] Education was not the only area in which the Republic and the Roman Catholic Church were in disagreement, but it was one of the most important. The Church in its alliance with the royalists and the army, witnessed by its participation in the Boulanger and Dreyfus affairs, had further gained the enmity of Republicans. These points of friction between the religious and civil authorities were to culminate in the Statute of December 1905 which ordained a peaceful separation of the Church and State in France.

The Dreyfus affair has become a symbol for the trials and tribulations of the Third Republic. The case itself was simple: a Jewish officer falsely accused and sentenced as a military spy while the guilty person, another French officer, shielded by the army authorities, remained free. The case would no doubt have remained behind the headlines had it not been publicized by men such as Clemenceau, Zola, and Anatole France. Soon the whole French nation was divided into Dreyfusards and

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[12] Bourgeois, op. cit., p. 273.

anti-Dreyfusards. In the first two trials of Dreyfus, the military was victorious, and it was not until 1906 that the innocence of Captain Dreyfus was declared. A majority of the Catholic churchmen were on the side of the military in the affair and again tangled with many republicans. Regardless of the personalities or dramatics of the case, underneath it all was a more serious problem. Was France to let the military authorities be scandalized in order to satisfy hypothetical justice for the sake of an unknown army captain? Was France to support by silence such racial discriminatory attacks as those made by Edouard Drumont and Maurice Barrès? The answer to the affair was decided when many honest, sincere Frenchmen rose in protest, not letting the matter rest until the captain's innocence had been declared.[13]

Under the Empire the industrial activity of the nineteenth century was already under progress, but it remained for the Third Republic to propagate a philosophy for the new age. If it could be symbolized in one word, the choice would be "Science". The French intellectuals "had gone in search of the new Grail, and had brought it back to their native land. It is to them that France is indebted for being able rapidly to regain lost ground and time, and to escape an intellectual Sedan."[14] One of these leaders, both by virtue of his genius and because of his

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[13] Most histories of the Republic devote considerable time to the Dreyfus case; an excellent treatment of it may be found in Brogan, op. cit., 329-357, passim.

[14] Coubertin, op. cit., p. 375.

influence on contemporaries was Hippolyte Taine who considered man as the product of his race, surroundings, and the moment. As Thomas Huxley in Britain had propagated Darwinian theories, so Ernest Renan was to present the new science to the French public, carrying Taine's evaluation of man to the ultimate in his analysis of Christ in the Life of Jesus. Parallel with the emphasis on scientific ideas was the rise of new sciences, anthropology and sociology in the foreground, and psychology. The sociologist would soon take notice of the declining population of France and seek to discover its causes in either immorality, alcoholism, the law of inheritance.[15] The influence of the scientific viewpoint and method, and the positivistic philosophy which had been formulated by Auguste Comte were to affect all the social science areas - history, economics, political science. Another manifestation of the effect of the scientific philosophy was the warfare between science and theology. The scientific attitude affected the fine arts; in literature, able practioners of observation, experiment, reliance on the everyday world, were found in Ibsen, Thomas Hardy, Zola, Swinburne, and Whitman; in art, Cézanne, Manet, Monet. Upon examination of the latter nineteenth century, it appears that here is a period which presents years of thought and action in which one unifying factor, the scientific spirit, seems to pervade.

By 1900 France had gone a long way from 1870 both in material progress and in intellectual growth. Political democracy was embodied

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[15]Coubertin, op. cit., 375-90, passim.

in the Constitutional Laws of 1875 providing a ministry directly responsible to a Chamber elected by universal manhood suffrage. France had again found herself in the family of nations, witnessed by her alliance in 1894 with Russia. Material prosperity was continuing; the religious problem despite clerical agitation was on its way to a settlement; the Dreyfus affair would soon be cleared; Boulanger had been disposed of; indeed, the Third Republic could face the new century with an unwarranted degree of self-satisfaction and optimism.

It must be noted that this abrupt outline of events in France from 1851-1901 is not a complete story in itself, but must be viewed with reference to those events preceding and following it. This chronological division is occasioned by the fact that Zola's novels happen to cover this particular period. Had Zola not died in 1902, undoubtedly the years covered by his writings would extend considerably into the twentieth century. In studying such a mass of material as is to be found in Zola's work one must arbitrarily select a method of approach. I have chosen to show the reflection of the period in Zola's novels by illustrating various attitudes and social pictures found in them. In addition to showing opinion upon politics, education, religion, science, intellectual movements, these novels should present social pictures peculiar to the French scene and thus of value to the student of history. Some of the novels by nature of the material included are of more value than others to the historical student and will naturally require more emphasis in the following chapters.

III. Political Attitudes and Opinions in Zola's Novels

The political views expressed in the novels of Zola fall into several broad categories: pro-Napoleon III and the Second Empire; anti-Napoleon, anti-Republican but pro-Monarchist, symbolized by support of the Bourbon heir, the Count de Chambord; anti-Napoleon, anti-monarchist but pro-Republican. In addition to views on the particular governments in control during these years, this chapter will treat some of the attitudes toward social movements, such as socialism, which of course are associated with politics.

La Fortune des Rougon, the first of the Rougon-Macquart series, is to a great extent a political novel and may well serve as a starting point for discussion as it places the historical background for the series. This novel is the story of the effect of the coup d'état of 1851 in a small town, Plassans, (Aix) an event which "retained the fortune of the Bonapartes, and also laid the foundation for that of the Rougons." [1] Thus, the story is representative of some of the varied feelings with which Louis Napoleon was received by France. While Eugène, the eldest son of Félicité and Pierre Rougon, was gaining a name for himself in the political arena of Paris, his parents had retired from their oil business and were leading a quiet bourgeois life.

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[1] Emile Zola, La Fortune des Rougon, edited with an introduction by Ernest A. Vizetelly (London, 1898), p. 347.

Eugène, who becomes involved in the coup d'état, informs his father of the events to take place and directs his parents to prepare Plassans for the political stroke which is about to take place in Paris. By the end of 1851, Pierre is awarded for his work by way of a government post of receiver of taxes and the ribbon of the Legion of Honor. His wife and accomplice, Félicité, finds her social aspirations immeasurably enhanced when she realized that she will no longer have to entertain in her shabby drawing room with its broken-down First Empire furniture covered with yellowish velvet with satin flowers, the orange-hued wallpaper splashed with large flowers, and the carpet which covers but the middle of the floor.[2] She too can now have a house like the former tax receiver's which she has regarded as her Tuilleries.[3]

In this story the Rougons, like most of their bourgeois friends in Plassans, are pro-monarchist until their son Eugène informs them of the changed political view they must assume if they wish to enhance their personal fortune. The people who habited the Rougon's drawing room at the time of Napoleon's election to the presidency in 1848 were disdainful of Napoleon, regarding him as a dreamer incapable of using authority, and as a person to be used only as a tool who would clear the way for them until the rightful pretender, the Count de Chambord should show himself.[4] Even after the Rougons began their subtle

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[2] Ibid., p. 71.

[3] Ibid., p. 104.

[4] Ibid., p. 78.

campaign to change opinion toward Napoleon, the monarchical element would say in answer to Rougon's assertion that Napoleon was needed to save France: "Let him save it, then, as quickly as possible, and let him then understand his duty by restoring it to its legitimate masters."[5]

The few people in the town who remained true to republican principles were some thousand workmen who still saluted the tree of liberty planted in the middle of the square in front of the Sub-Prefecture. Finally, even the tree, which had slowly been decaying, had to be removed. None of the republicans could understand this decay although it was rumoured that Félicité sprinkled the poplar with vitriol every night when the town was asleep.[6] The anti-Napoleon element in the town is most pathetically shown by a young republican, Silvère, a youthful dreamer of some seventeen years who spent his time dreaming of humanitarian Utopias and reading all the books on republicanism that he could find in the brokers' shops in the Faubourg.[7] Silvère had become a firm believer in the Republic and Liberty, and though he would not have killed a fly, he was always talking of taking up arms if necessary to defend his passion for Liberty. Thus, when the news of the coup d'état reached the provinces, this lad was ready to join the insurgents of neighbouring towns to fight the government troops which had been sent forth to combat this expected disorder. He was

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[5] Ibid., p. 94.

[6] Ibid., p. 96.

[7] Ibid., p. 201.

was later caught, and while he was being shot, the bourgeois of Plassans gathered in Félicité's old drawing room to celebrate the newly found fortune of the Rougons. As Silvère's blood flows in a nearby graveyard, Commander Sicardot, an old soldier of Napoleon who thinks that none but soldiers have a right to the ribbon, compromises his belief for the gaiety of the occasion to take the pink satin bow from Félicité's hair and fasten it in Rougon's button-hole as a temporary substitute for the real ribbon.[8]

The above story has been used as an example of the effect of national politics in the provinces and as an illustration of how many persons did make their personal fortunes because of aiding or supporting the coup d'état in one way or another. Son Excellence Eugène Rougon, which related the adventures of Rougon as deputy and prime minister gives further pictures of the working of the Second Empire once it had been established.[9] Rougon begins his career as an autocrat in politics and later, after losing his ministerial position because of excessive despotic measures, makes concessions to the Liberal Empire which had been shaping since 1860. One of the repressive measures which the Empire utilized was a strict censorship over literary material. In this particular novel the reader is given numerous examples of how this censorship probably worked. At one time, during Rougon's office as Minister of the Interior, an associate of his is showing him a newspaper and remarking to him:

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[8] Ibid., p. 347.

[9] Emile Zola, Son Excellence Eugène Rougon, sole authorized English version with a preface by Ernest A. Vizetelly (New York, 1897).

Have you read this? There is a leading article here appealing to the basest passions. ..."The hand that punishes should be impeccable, for, if justice miscarries, the very bonds which unite society loosen of their own accord." You understand the insinuation, eh? And, here again, ...there's a story about a Countess eloping with the son of a corn-factor. The papers ought not to be allowed to publish such things. It tends to destroy the people's respect for the upper classes. [10]

Later in the story, Rougon himself discusses this problem with the editor of the paper, finding such objectionable articles on the government even more abominable because the newspaper is supposed to be one of the nationalist press. After berating the editor for political inferences against the government appearing in the paper's columns, Rougon attacks a novel which the newspaper is publishing serially. (Many novels of the time, including some of Zola's, were published serially in the newspapers before they were published in book form.) A well-bred woman in the mentioned novel betrays her husband, and this, states Rougon, supplies a detestable argument against good education. The editor upon revealing that he had read the story and after replying 'no' to Rougon's question as to whether the lady felt remorse at the end hurries out of the room with the minister's shouts in the background: "It is absolutely necessary that she should feel remorse! Insist upon the author filling her with remorse!" [11]

Rougon's criticism of certain publications was to contribute to his fall from office. In a discussion of "Friend Jacques's Evening Chats" it was revealed that Delestang, a rapid growing friend of the Emperor as well as the Liberal Empire, held opinions contrary to Rougon.

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[10] Ibid., p. 209.

[11] Ibid., pp. 231-2.

In a private conversation, Rougon sums up the volume as a mixture of socialism, witchcraft, and agriculture, with a particularly distressing chapter on the advantages of trades' unions; indeed, in his estimation, it could very likely create a harmful effect upon the peasant and working classes where it was being circulated. Delestang protests this indictment of the book and calls the chapter on the advantages of the association of labour 'very good' and full of ideas with which the Emperor might agree. At a ministerial council, Delestang's opinion of the book as 'not harmful' was upheld rather than Rougon's desire to ban the book.

While on the one hand the Empire endeavoured to censor what it considered oppositional propaganda, it also produced literature favourable to itself. In La Terre, a group of peasants are shown completing a social evening by listening to one of them read from a pamphlet, "The Misfortune and Triumph of Jacques Bonhomme", in which the trials and ultimate prosperity of the peasant under Napoleon III are related. [12]

Much attention has been devoted by historians to Napoleon's humanitarian ideals and such works of his as the Extinction du Paupérisme. Delestang, as minister of agriculture and a man of liberal ideas, is often pictured talking with Napoleon in this novel. In one instance, Napoleon shows approval of a model farm of Delestang's where farm hands lived in common, shared certain profits, and became entitled to old-age pensions. [13] At another event in the story, when the

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[12] Emile Zola, La Terre, no translator stated (London, 1888), p. 65.

[13] Son Excellence Eugène Rougon, p. 159.

imperial family is entertaining at Compiègne, Rougon, one of the week-end guests, sees a light late at night in the Emperor's bedroom and thinks to himself that perhaps the Emperor is considering his scheme for founding an industrial centre where the extinction of pauperism might be attempted on a large scale. Whether Napoleon's humanitarian ideals were sincere or not has always been a disputed point among historians. From the illustrations given by Zola in his novels regarding the Emperor's ideas (and certainly Zola had no reason to present the Emperor in a favourable light) it is apparent that Zola at least felt the Emperor was sincere in his beliefs.

The wife of the Delestang referred to above is one of those French women who play an ardent role in politics, reigning from their drawing rooms. Madame Delestang, who prior to her marriage had been a supporter of Rougon, transferred her support to her husband and at her receptions a group of people could now be found who dream of a democratic empire. They talk of drawing up codes of rules for trades unions, building cheap workmen's houses, and in general discussing the democratic part the Bonapartists are to play in the new society.[14]

While there were followers of the Emperor like the Delestangs who were willing to liberalize it in order to save it, there was also great opposition by the republicans who wished to see an entire change of government. Zola seems to have used the actual speeches of opposition members, for one is shown calling the second of December (1851) a "crime" in words and tone that appear suggestingly like Gambetta's

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[14] Ibid., p. 307.

speech in the Assembly. (This is the period where the Empire has made some concessions to liberal government, one of them being the right of deputies to question the governmental policies on the house floor). Another made a long speech, parts of which will be quoted for they show very well the tone of the opposition:

> We are still far away from the principles of '89 which are so ostentatiously inscribed at the head of the Imperial Constitution. If the government persists in arming itself with exceptional laws, if it continues to force its own candidates upon the country, if it refuses to free the press from arbitrary control, if in a word, it still keeps France at its mercy, all the seeming concessions which it may make will be lying ones ---
> ...Yes, we are revolutionists, if by revolutionists you mean men of progress, resolved upon winning liberty. Refuse the people liberty, and one day the people will seize it![15]

Rougon, who in order to retain some semblance of power, had become a follower of the Liberal Empire. In answer to the above speech of the opposition Rougon set forth the views of the Liberal Empire:

> We too are revolutionists, if by that term is meant men of progress, who are resolved to restore to the country, piece by piece, every reasonable liberty---
> ...It will be sufficient to prove to you that the Emperor with his genius and noble heart has forestalled the demands of the most bitter opponents of his rule. ...Consult your own consciences, gentlemen, and ask yourselves whether you do not feel that you are free. ...Doubtless the government recommends its candidates. But does not the revolutionary party support its own with shameless audacity? We are attacked, and we defend ourselves. ...The revolutionary party must settle the matter with the nation, for it is the nation that supports the Empire by overwhelming majorities...[16]

The statement of Rougon's that the nation supported the Liberal Empire was true, for when the people in May of 1870 voted their approval of

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[15] Ibid., pp. 349-351, passim.

[16] Ibid., pp. 352-6, passim.

the liberal reforms, despite the attempts of the republicans to make the vote adverse to the Empire, the great peasant majority of France again revealed their liking for Napoleons.

Besides the formal opposition in the chamber, throughout Zola's novels there are references to particular acts of the Empire. The Cobden commercial treaty of 1860 with England was being criticized in the late sixties. One country landowner states that the empire had gone too far with commercial freedom:

> Wheat, which is at fifty-two francs a quarter, costs forty-six to produce. If it falls any lower it means ruin. And every year, folks say, America is increasing her exportation of cereals. We are threatened with a regular glut of the market. ...What will become of us then? See here! I've always been in favour of progress, science, and liberty. Well, I'm shaken in my creed, upon my word. Yes, indeed. We can't starve to death; let's have Protection. [17]

The two deputy candidates for this farmer's district were basing their platforms for the coming election upon protection, one being for it and the other for free trade.

In Une Page d'Amour which takes place at the time of the Crimean War, we have a reference to foreign policy of the Empire. One Madame Deberle, a society lady, had for days before the declaration of war, devoted herself solely to foreign politics as "any woman must who pretended to any position." She explains the necessity of neutralizing the Black Sea to her sister Pauline who advocated the cause of Russia in opposition to France.[18] At the time of the Italian wars for

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[17] La Terre, pp. 124-5.

[18] Emile Zola, Une Page d'Amour (n.p., n.d.) p. 333.

unification, expression in favour of giving Rome up to the King of Italy is shown by persons like Dr. Juillerat, an atheist and a republican, and opposition to this view is frequently shown by clergymen, such as Abbé Mauduit, an ultramontane, who prophesies the catastrophy of France if she does not shed the last drop of her blood to protect the temporal power of the Pope.[19] Many of the bourgeois who had formerly sided with Napoleon are shown changing their support, quite often because of the imperial foreign policy pursued in Italy and in Mexico.

There are occasional characters in Zola's novels who express a not uncommon indifference to politics. They might be called the chameleons of the political world, ready to change their support to any government provided they are personally happy under it. One of those who best expresses this viewpoint is Coupeau, a zinc-worker, who interrupts a political discussion of his friends to tell them how silly they are to spent their time quarreling about politics. As for him, either a king, an emperor, or nothing, so long as he can earn his five francs a day and continue eating and sleeping.[20] Similar views are well-expressed by Lisa, the pork-butcher's wife in Le Ventre de Paris. Lis is grateful to the government when business prospers, and when she can eat her meals in peace and comfort without being awakened by the firing of guns.

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[19]Emile Zola, Pot Bouille, translated by Percy Pinkerton (New York, 1924), p. 98.

[20]Emile Zola, L'Assommoir, edited by Ernest A. Vizetelly (London, 1902), p. 80.

After recalling the days of '48 and her uncle's losing finances in the pork-butchery business that year, she declares that everything is more prosperous under the Empire. Lisa seems to be one of those persons Theodor Flathe mentions who are bound to the empire by material prosperity. (see page 16, Chapter Two) In a discussion with her husband Lisa's opinions are given to the reader:

> For my part, I'm in favour of making hay while the sun shines, and supporting a Government which promotes trade. If it does dishonourable things, I prefer to know nothing of them. ...At the time of the last elections, you remember, Gavard said that the Emperor's candidate had been bankrupt, and was mixed up in all sorts of scandalous matters. Well, perhaps that was true, I don't deny it; but all the same, you acted wisely in voting for him, for all that was not in question; you were not asked to lend the man any money or to transact any business with him, but merely to show the Government that you were pleased with the prosperity of the pork trade. [21]

The support of the bourgeois toward Napoleon III during the early years of the Empire almost entirely because of their enriched personal fortunes is also affirmed by the historian Emile Bourgeois. [22] There are also rather amusing characters like Gavard, also of Le Ventre de Paris who had found fault with Charles X, Louis Philippe, Napoleon III, and who seems to exist to make himself as disagreeable as possible to any existing government. [23]

Many persons' lives were changed by the coup d'état. One of these, Florent, a character in Le Ventre de Paris, symbolizes a type of

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[21] Emile Zola, Le Ventre de Paris, translated by Ernest A. Vizetelly (London, 1908), pp. 168-9.

[22] Bourgeois, op. cit., p. 17.

[23] Le Ventre de Paris, p. 66.

republican under the Second Empire. Florent, walking the streets during those December days of 1851, had the misfortune to stumble over a dead young woman who had been shot in the street fighting in Paris. He was picked up by the gendarmes, and the blood on his hands from the young woman caused him to be regarded as a serious suspect. Florent was wrongly accused of belonging to a secret society and consequently was exiled. (According to Bourgeois, a number (approximately 100,000 for all of France) of persons were exiled or imprisoned in the days following the coup d'état, many of whom had not committed any obvious crime.[24]) Years later Florent escaped and returned to live in the city markets of Paris with his brother Quenu, the pork-butcher and the latter's handsome buxom wife, Lisa. Lisa, anxious to avoid any political disturbance because of Florent's exile, introduced him to the neighbourhood as her cousin and secures a respectable position for him as fish inspector in the markets.

Florent who under ordinary circumstances might have been a schoolmaster had suffered too much from politics not to make them his life work. Working in the markets, he soon sees them as symbolical of a gluttonous Empire. To him, the markets with their ever-abundant display of food are like the stomach of the shop-keeping classes, the stomach of those who declare that everything is for the best since people have never before grown so beautifully fat.[25] Florent soon becomes a friend of a group in the neighbourhood who spend their time discussing the hateful Empire, republican ideals, and various forms of

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[24] Bourgeois, op. cit., pp. 3-6.

[25] Le Ventre de Paris, p. 143.

socialism and communism. Florent's opinion is that the political revolution has already taken place and now a social movement is needed which will recognize the claims of the people.[26] After many political discussions the group around Florent plan for an insurrection of Paris, but before the plans can be realized, the police have been informed of the republican plot in the city markets and once more Florent is exiled.

The Republic which Florent and friends dreamed about was to come with the war of 1870, but not without grief for all of France. When news of the war broke out, most of France, regardless of specific criticism of Napoleon III, was ready to unite against the invader, and most everyone like Jean, the peasant of La Terre, and the soldier of La Débâcle felt that the Prussians like the Austrians a few years ago would get a good hiding from the French.[27] La Débâcle, the story of the Franco-Prussian war is one of the most moving of Zola's works. The part in the war played by a corporal Jean and his friend Maurice, a private, form the basis of the personal element of the story, but the greater part of the novel centers on the movement of troops from Rheims to Sedan, the collapse of Sedan, the seige of Paris, and the commune.[28] This novel depicts all the horror and pathos of war - the brutally slain on the battlefield, the maimed in the hospitals, the ruined

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[26] Ibid., pp. 158-9.

[27] La Terre, p. 389.

[28] Emile Zola, La Débâcle, translated by Ernest A. Vizetelly (New York, 1925).

homes and personal lives of civilians, the catastrophe in which France nearly perished. Coming at a time when many persons were participating in world movements against war, it was heralded as a great social document. In France its reception was quite mixed. The partisans of the army denounced the book and thrust accusations of "traitor" and "treason" upon its author while politicians like Jean Jaurès and Clemenceau were beginning to recognize the social character of Zola's literary action. [29]

When war was announced the country was inflamed by the military spirit and shouts of 'A Berlin! A Berlin! A Berlin! could be heard on all the streets mingled with the singing of the Marsellaise. Most of France, like Jean, was optimistic in believing that the Prussians would soon be routed. A serious analysis of the real situation is provided by the brother-in-law of Maurice, an unassuming bourgeois shopkeeper living near Sedan. It may be suspected this his opinions are the views of Zola and they do coincide with the views of many historians who have analyzed the causes of the lightning defeat of France. Zola's narrative of Weiss's explanation of the real situation to Maurice follows:

...the victory of Sadowa had brought Prussia increased power, a national movement was placing her at the head of the other German States, a vast Empire was in progress of formation. ...Thanks to the system of compulsory military service the whole nation was up in arms, fully instructed, well disciplined, provided with a powerful war material, trained also to European warfare, and still flushed with the glory of its triumph over Austria. ...the Empire greatly aged, ... but still acclaimed, as witness the Plebiscitum but rotten at the basis, having weakened love of country by destroying liberty, and having reverted to liberal courses when these could be of no avail ... [the army was

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[29] Josephson, op. cit. 340-4, passim.

weakened by the system of evading service by pecuniary payment and because of inefficient officers] ...and at the head of them there was the Emperor, ailing, and hesitating, deceived by others and deceiving himself as to the outcome of the frightful adventure, into which they all plunged like blind men, without any attempt at serious preparation, and amid universal bewilderment and confusion. [30]

A workman in the army "who had badly digested some scraps of speeches heard at public meetings, and who mingled revolutionary clap-trap with the great principles of equality and liberty" also had an opinion about the war:

If Badinguet [a nickname applied to Napoleon III] and Bismarck have a row together let them settle it between them with their fists, instead of troubling hundreds of thousands of men who don't even known one another, and have no wish to fight. [31]

Jean, like most of the men in the army, sees it his natural patriotic duty to fight while Maurice, a cultured and educated person, sees war as a natural thing, inevitable to the existence of nations, in conformity with his beliefs of evolution. [32]

Throughout the course of events in the war, the impression of both soldiers and ordinary folk regarding the Emperor is a pathetic one. Maurice pictures the Emperor, "deprived of his imperial authority which he had confided to the Empress-Regent, and divested of the supreme command of the army which he had entrusted to Marshal Bazaine, so that he now had become a mere nothing - a vague, undefined shadow of an Emperor, a nameless and cumbersome inutility whom no one knew longer

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[30] La Débâcle, pp. 14-5.

[31] Ibid., p. 39.

[32] Ibid., p. 8.

what to do with, whom Paris rejected... ."[33] One of the rich bourgeois manufacturers of Sedan, a Monsieur Delaherche, who in May of 1870 had vigorously stirred up the local vote for the Emperor, now has a different opinion of Louis Napoleon. Speaking to the corporal Jean, he affirms this changed attitude:

> Ah! monsieur, yes, I can indeed say that the Emperor has greatly deceived me. ...No, people mustn't try to make us pity his fate, by telling us that he was deceived by others, and that the Opposition refused him the necessary credits. It is he who has deceived us, whose vices and blunders have plunged us into the frightful mess in which we find ourselves. [34]

Yet when the Republic was proclaimed in 1870, many who had come to disapprove of the Empire were not yet sympathetic to the Republic. There were those like Jean who felt it was all right if it would help to lick the Prussians. A change was needed, but was it the Republic? This soldier, who during his peasant life had heard bad things about the Republic, did not feel in a position to judge its merits. The manufacturer Delaherche also felt some doubts, but the main thing he wanted was peace:

> No, no; we cannot be on the side of the furious madmen [referring to Gambetta and associates who wished to continue the war] It's becoming a massacre - I for my part side with Monsieur Thiers, who wishes the elections to take place. As for their Republic, well, that doesn't inconvenience me; we'll keep it if necessary, till we get something better. [35]

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[33] Ibid., p. 45.

[34] Ibid., pp. 335-6.

[35] Ibid., p. 467.

In the story Maurice has to leave his friend Jean behind in Sedan while he goes on to Paris. After fighting to keep Paris from the Germans before the signing of the armistice, Maurice then joins the commune. Seized by the insanity which had taken possession of Paris, Maurice felt it his duty to fight with the commune and to punish both traitors and cowards to save the Republic. Jean who has recovered from wounds also comes to Paris, and fighting for the government forces, accidentally shoots his old comrade Maurice. Zola pictures the veritable state of anarchy in Paris during these days, Frenchmen fighting Frenchmen, hundred of people killed, and finally Paris being burned by the communards. And in the midst of the burning of Paris by the insurrectionaries, a Prussian officer gazes on the scene with a certain satisfaction:

> Paris was burning in punishment of its centuries of evil life, its long career of crime and lust. Once again the Teutons save the world, sweeping away the final specks of Latin corruption. [36]

The novels of Zola which have as their background the Third Republic devote little attention to particular political events of these years, such as the debate over the Constitutional Laws of 1875, the defeat of the monarchical element with the fall of McMahon's ministry in 1878, the Boulanger crisis. None of the novels of this later period are primarily political like La Fortune des Rougon or Son Excellence Eugène Rougon. This is the case because there are only some six novels which have the Third Republic as their historical background. It is also true because Zola seems to stress ideas such

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[36] Ibid., p. 508.

as science, socialism, religion, education rather than events in his later novels. One of these predominant ideas is socialism.

In the Rougon-Macquart series there are several novels which consider socialism; while written to portray the Second Empire, these particular novels actually show some of the attitudes toward socialism which were most prominent after the Empire, and show the influence of the times upon Zola at the time of his actual writing. One of these is Germinal, published in 1885.[37] Etienne, the central figure in the story, is a young man who comes to a mining town in the north of France and there lives and works under the harshest conditions along with other people of the community. Although without formal education, he soon finds himself becoming interested in working-class problems. A fellow lodger Souvarine, a Russia and somewhat of a nihilist and anarchist, lends Etienne many books and pamphlets on political economy. His extensive and unplanned reading, including works describing the diseases which fall upon collier populations, anarchist pamphlets, and books on collective societies, finally form some semblance of order in his mind and he dreams of a "universal association for mutual exchange which should abolish all monetary traffic and make labour the sole basis of social life."[38]

Upon reading of an International Association of Labour (Zola probably means to infer the Marxian International) and hearing it spoken of by a member of the group from Paris, Etienne gets the miners in the village

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[37] Emile Zola, Germinal, edited with a Preface by Ernest A. Vizetelly (London, 1914).

[38] Ibid., pp. 134-5.

to combine and to join the International. Etienne thinks this can be very beneficial and visualizes this organization in glowing terms:

> At the base 'the section' representing the parish; then 'the federation' uniting the sections of a province; higher up still, the nation; and at the very top, humanity, personified by a general council, in which each nation would be represented by a corresponding secretary. Before six months were over the world would be conquered, and the workmen would dictate laws to their employers if the latter should prove refractory. [39]

Etienne represents an opinion which held faith that the working class would come into its own before the end of the century. After reading Marx, Proudhon, and Lassalle he gradually arrived at his theory of collectivism in which all the instruments of labour would be collectively held by one and all.[40] Etienne soon has a chance to be a leader in the strike which the miners of the Voreau pit commence in order to gain better working conditions and wages. For a long period the miners and their families remain loyal to their cause and refuse to go back to work despite the personal privation they suffer. After the strike has been on for a period, a mass meeting of workers and their families is held to decide upon further action. The fervent words of their leader Etienne sway the crowd to the decision of continuing:

> The wage system is only a new form of slavery. The mine should belong to the miner, like the sea belongs to the fisherman, like the soil belongs to the peasant. Do you hear? The mine belongs to you, to you all who, for a century past, have paid for it with so much blood and misery.

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[39] Ibid., p. 116.

[40] Ibid., pp. 198-9.

[41] Ibid., p. 238.

Inspired by Etienne's words and reacting to mob spirit, the crowd marches upon the homes of the mine managers, crying for food and the settlement of their demands. Their shouts of "Long Live Socialism! Death to the bourgeois! death to them!" are reminiscent of the March of Women to Versailles in October of 1789. The rioting is quieted by government troops and the men are told they must await the decision of the stockholders, a vague incomprehensible force to these starving workmen who are unable to understand why their demands cannot be met. Finally, after having despaired of the International for not aiding them sufficiently, the strikers succumb to the demands of their stomachs and return to the mines. Etienne, their sincere but rather sketchily informed and indecisive leader, leaves town still optimistic, however, in his hopes for the workmen feeling that:

> They must quietly combine, learn to know each other, gather together in unions, when the laws should allow it. [Trade unions were not formally legalized in France until 1884.] Then on the day when they felt themselves elbow to elbow, when they found themselves millions of workmen confronting a few thousands of lazy idlers, they would seize upon power and become the masters. Ah! what an awakening of truth and justice![42]

Germinal, more than just an example of the ideas of socialism prevalent during these years, is a dramatic poem of all the aspects of life in a mining town in the late nineteenth century, the miners' work, their homes, their social life, their poverty, their hopes and fears.

When the government troops had been sent to dispel the rioting of the strikers, Etienne cherished the hope that the army might possibly

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[42] Ibid., p. 442.

declare itself for the working classes and then how easy their task would be. But of course that did not happen. In another novel Travail an army captain states his view of socialism, calling it a stupendous farce, a mere idea. Why, a sabre could at any rate be seen, but who had seen the Idea, that pretended Queen of the Earth.[43] There is also occasional evidence of the bourgeois attitude toward the working classes in Zola's novels. One common view is presented by Deneulin, one of the mine managers in Germinal who blames the middle classes for their frantic fury for Liberalism and their 'obsequious flattery of the people' which only leads to such events as the strike. In general the bourgeois in this novel are shown as being very troubled by the strike and aware of the fact that it is probably one sign of further blows that would come from the working classes.[44] In Travail another bourgeois attitude is exemplified in the views of an engineer of an iron works, Deleveau. While he admits the desirability of relief and pension funds and even of cooperative societies, thus recognizing that the workman is not to be forbidden to have his position improved, at the same time he violently condemns syndicates and class groupings designed for collective action.[45]

In L'Argent which was written after Germinal the message of socialism was again transmitted via the novel.[46] The story concerns

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[43]Emile Zola, Travail, translated by Ernest A. Vizetelly (London, 1901), p. 93.

[44]Germinal, p. 441.

[45]Travail, p. 37.

[46]Emile Zola, L'Argent, translated by Ernest A. Vizetelly (London, 1923), p. 91.

the adventures of a financier Aristide Saccard on the Bourse, his promotion and managing of a Universal Bank and his final ruin as well as that of many of his subscribers through over-speculation. The socialist doctrine is proclaimed by a young Sigismund Busch, well-educated in the doctrines of Karl Marx as well as being a linguist. Sigismund has spent his life working out plans for an actual socialist community and after Saccard has been bitterly ruined, Busch's ideas stand forth as hope for a future society that will prevent such financial catastrophes:

> ...The nation is simply an immense co-operative society, the appliances become the property of all, the products are centralised in vast general warehouses. ...The hour's work is the common measure; an article is worth what it has cost in hours; ... No more money, and therefore no more speculation, no more robbery, no more abominable trafficking, no more of those crimes which cupidity prompts, girls married for their dowry's sake, aged parents strangled for their property ... . No more hostile classes, employers, and wage-workers, proletarians and bourgeois, and therefore no more restrictive laws or courts, no armed force protecting the iniquitous monopolies of the few against the mad hunger of the many! No more idlers of any sort, and therefore no more landlords living on rents, ... [47]

In the later novels of Zola, there appears to be a change from stress upon a Marxian type of socialism to emphasis upon a type of collectivism, dominated by Fourierist ideas. In Paris, the story of a man who leaves the priesthood for a secular life, happiness is found in a society which has as its foundation, Science and Rationalism and a social philosophy of peaceful collectivism. [48] This departure from

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[47] L'Argent, p. 421.

[48] Emile Zola, Paris, translated by Ernest A. Vizetelly (London, 1925).

Marxian socialism is carried to its ultimate in Travail, the gospel of work. Luc Froment, thesecond son of the former priest Pierre of Paris establishes a model industrial town on Fourieristic principles, in which there are a common school, bright clean dwellings with garden plots, clean workshops, a general store. In this village with a steel foundry as its central industry, Luc sets up a type of collectivism which succeeds very well. Though these two novels propagate a different type of collectivism not particularly predominant in these years, they are significant to the historian for various reasons. First, they reveal that Zola as a person was conscious of a need for some reform in the industrial society of his people. In his writings, he seems to have evolved from a Marxian socialistic viewpoint to a peaceful collectivism. Second, this new type of society envisioned by Zola in Paris and Travail suggests that man by his reason and the aid of science can establish a life on earth which can truly be a Utopia. This discarding of religion (in Travail, the priest has a church which is depicted as usually being empty; at the end of the story, the church roof collapses, as if symbolic of the downfall of Roman Catholicism in France) in the building of a new society will be discussed further in following chapters.

Another one of the provacative attitudes which Zola illustrates is anarchism. Souvarine, a Russian character in Germinal, who wishes to have "no more nations, no more governments, no more property, no God, no religion", represents a kind of anarchist thought prevalent at the time in his attacks on the French workers:

Yes, that is the idea of all of you - of every French workman - to unearth some treasure or other so as to live on it afterwards in egotism and laziness. You may shout as much as you like against the rich, you lack the courage to hand over to the poor the money which fortune may send you. You will never be worthy of happiness while you have something belonging to yourselves, and while your hatred of the bourgeois proceeds from your mad wish to be bourgeois in their stead.[49]

This type of worker criticized by Souvarine actually appears ina characterization in Travail:

He [a worker named Ragu] cried out at times against capitalist rule, he was enraged by the strain of the labour imposed on him, and was even capable of a short rebellion. But prolonged atavism had bent him; he really had the soul of a slave, respecting established traditions and envying the employer ... and the only covert ambition that he nourished was that of taking the employer's place some fine morning in order to possess and enjoy life in his turn.[50]

In the novel Paris the anarchist outrages in Paris during the nineties are shown. Pierre Froment's brother, Guillaume, is a chemist who has invented a powerful explosive. He has also become involved with a group of anarchists and in carrying out their plans almost blows up the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart as it is filled with thousands of pilgrims. Pierre, the rational brother who has found peace in his humanitarian ideas, prevents such a useless action just in time. Guillaume, swayed by his brother's ideas, has a change of views and diverts his explosive to be used for motive power that will benefit mankind rather than destroy it.

Another interesting view toward socialism and politics in general is expressed by scientists in Zola's works. One of the best characteriza-

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[49] Germinal, p. 336.

[50] Travail, p. 56.

tions of this viewpoint is given by the scientist Bertheroy of Paris. Because of his belief in science as the only revolutionary, he has a contempt for the agitators of politics, telling Guillaume after the latter had diverted the purpose of his explosive:

> ...And how many times already have I not told you that science alone is the world's revolutionary force, the only force which far above all paltry political incidents, the vain agitation of despots, priests, sectarians, and ambitious people of all kinds, works for the benefit of those who will come after us, and prepares the triumph of truth, justice and peace. ...Ah, ... in it, you have only to remain in your laboratory here, for human happiness can only spring from the furnace of the scientist. [51]

The preceding pages have given examples of some of the political attitudes as well as expressed views toward social reform which are revealed in the novels of Zola. It is naturally impossible to separate politics from all other areas of thought and action. Therefore, the following chapters in addition to showing specific attitudes in other areas may also add to political understanding of the period represented in this chapter.

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[51] Paris, pp. 485-6.

IV. Religious and Educational Attitudes in Zola's Novels

The attitudes toward religion and education in the novels of Zola may be related in one chapter because most often they are associated in the treatment they receive in the novels. Before showing these attitudes, it may be revealing to say something of Zola's treatment of them. His works reveal a hostile attitude toward organized religion, particularly Roman Catholicism, for no apparent reason except the fact that he had succeeded in convincing himself that science and education could take the place of religion in man's life. While there are intense pictures unfavourable to religion in Zola's novels, it should be remembered that this is also a manifestation of the prevailing secular spirit of the age. Matthew Josephson in his biography of Zola quotes Pope Leo XIII as saying: "Zola was an enemy of the Church, but he was a frank and straightforward enemy. May his soul repose in heaven!" [1] And Zola was straightforward! When he had something to say of religion or the Roman Catholic Church, he minced no words.

Few of Zola's secular characters are persons of sincere religious beliefs, and a great many are persons who profess to religion apparently because of social pressure or prestige. One such example is Pauline,

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[1] Josephson, op. cit., p. 384.

a young girl in La Joie de Vivre who has come from Paris to a small town to live with relatives. In Paris, where she received no religious training, she had frequently heard priests scoffed and sneered at as hypocrites whose black robes concealed sins and wickedness. When she came to the village of Bonneville, her aunt Madame Chanteau saw to it that she received her delayed religious training. Madame Chanteau's religion had never been anything more than a matter of appearance and respectability, but she regarded it as part of a polite education for a young lady, as necessary as the art of deportment. [2] Pauline soon evolved a religion in her mind which pictured the Deity as a "very powerful, very wise ruler, who directed everything upon earth in accordance with the principles of strict justice." This conception was sufficient to satisfy the requirements of the kindly village priest, Abbé Horteur. [3]

Another non-religious character is Hèlène in Une Page d'Amour. Although she has no Christian tendencies, one of the best friends of this young lady and her daughter is the Abbé Rambaud who frequently would say, with good-natured indulgence, that good hearts carve out their own salvation by deeds of loving kindness and charity. God would know when and how to touch his friend Hèlène.[4] One of Hèlène's friends is a doctor's wife, Madame Deberle, who finds a certain emotional and social

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[2]Emile Zola, La Joie de Vivre, no translator given (London, 1889), p. 53.

[3]Ibid., pp. 55-6.

[4]Une Page d'Amour, p. 150.

pleasure in presenting flowers to the church, giving alms, coming to church attired in her best. All the more so does Madame Deberle enjoy her religion because her husband has no interest in it, thus her devotions have all the sweetness of forbidden fruit. [5] In the following words of Zola, religion for her was:

> ... different from evening dances, concerts, and first nights... . The store of religion which she had acquired in her school-days now found new life in her giddy brain, taking shape in all sorts of trivial observances, as though she were reviving the games of her childhood.[6]

Again in L'Assommoir, when it came to the question of christening the baby of Gervaise and the workman Coupeau, Coupeau saw no reason for it. It certainly would not procure her an income and she might catch a cold from it. [7]

Among the persons who are non-religious there are a number of them who do see religion as a necessity for others. Savin, a clerk serving a local tax-collecter in Vérité is one such person who states:

> I am an anti-clerical as I am a Republican. But I hasten to add that in my opinion a religion is necessary for women and children, and that as long as the Catholic religion is that of the country, why, we may as well have that one as another![8]

Lisa, the pork-butcher's wife, already introduced to the reader in Chapter II, has similar views with respect to religion in that she looks upon it as a sort of police force that helps to maintain order and without which no government would be possible. She herself did

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[5] Ibid., p. 155.

[6] Ibid., p. 160.

[7] L'Assommoir, p. 95.

[8] Emile Zola, Vérité, translated by Ernest A. Vizetelly (New York, 1903), p. 59.

not observe the ordinances of the Church but disliked to hear religion spoken ill of and often she silenced the family friend Gavard who talked of turning out the priests by saying:

> A great deal of good that would do! Why, before a month was over the people would be murdering one another in the streets, and you would be compelled to invent another God. That was just what happened in '93. You know very well that I'm not given to mixing with the priests, but for all that I say that they are necessary, as we couldn't do without them. [9]

The position of religion in reference to social issues most frequently is discussed in Zola's novels along with education. These are, however, occasional examples of a clerical attitude toward social reform. The village priest in Germinal, the story of the strike, censured the higher dignitaries of the Church and the bourgeois, believing that deliverance for the people would come from the country priests who would restore the reign of Christ. He apparantly was in sympathy with the workmen but had no immediate earthly salvation for them. [10] In Rome Zola, does present a Roman Catholic Viscount who is a proponent of Roman Catholic Socialism in France. He had established model farms where he put his ideas of Christian Socialism into practice. [11]

The above examples are some of the occasional references to religion which can be found in Zola's novels. Several of the novels deal entirely with the religious problem (primarily as Zola sees it) and can be best presented by summarization. One of these, La Conquête de Plassans, is the story of the role of a priest working for the

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[9] Le Ventre de Paris, p. 220.

[10] Germinal, p. 327.

[11] Emile Zola, Rome, translated by Ernest A. Vizetelly (New York, 1925), p. 13.

Second Empire.[12] The Abbé Faujas is sent to Plassans by the government in order to combat the Vatican element in the town which has been in opposition to the Empire. Making himself a friend of the community by starting a home for young girls and a young men's club, the Abbé first establishes a social relationship in the community. Then he proceeds to artfully suggest an imperial candidate in the town for the office of deputy. In addition to the political role of the priest, Zola makes another of his religious attacks. Abbé Faujas and his mother take a room with Martha and Frances Mouret. Madame Mouret, who has never been a religious person, finds herself becoming zealously religious under the influence of the Abbé, to the extent of neglecting her home and driving her husband to insanity. In much the same manner, Zola writes another full book, La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret to attack celibacy in the Roman Catholic Church.[13] The Abbé Mouret falls in love with a lovely young girl, the niece of a staunch non-believer who lives in Paradou, a fantastic old estate of crumbling ruins and flower gardens. After becoming seriously ill, the priest is taken by his friend Dr. Pascal to Paradou to recuperate. It is here that he falls in love with Albine, but he is able to recover from this temporary transgression and returns to the Church.

These two novels are examples of Zola's early portrayals of religion, but it was in his later works Lourdes, Rome, and Paris that the attack upon Roman Catholicism was completed. In Lourdes,[14]

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[12]Emile Zola, La Conquête de Plassans, edited by Ernest A. Vizetelly, (London, 1900).

[13]Emile Zola, La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret, edited by Ernest A. Vizetelly, (London, 1911).

[14]Emile Zola, Lourdes, translated by Ernest A. Vizetelly (London, 1913).

Abbé Pierre Froment is shown as a priest who doubts his religious convictions and makes the annual pilgrimage to Lourdes with a friend of his (a young lady whom Pierre loved but who became a cripple, for life, as the doctors thought, at which time Pierre entered the priesthood) who is seeking to be cured. In seeing all the diseased and maimed, who have despaired of medical science and are seeking a miracle, Abbé Pierre hopes that he too can receive a miracle which will renew his faith. Zola sincerely tries, I believe, to make the miracles at Lourdes understood, but neither he nor his character the Abbé succeeds. In Rome, Abbé Froment who has been discouraged by the animal faith displayed at Lourdes hopes to find a new religion. Froment, believing this new religion is in Roman Catholic socialism, writes a book on it which he takes to Rome where it is refused by the Pope. The outcome of Abbé Pierre's struggle is found in Paris in which novel he forsakes the Church to lead a secular life. These latter novels of Zola are not actually faithful representations of the period. Inasmuch as Pierre's struggles for truth could be the struggles of any man, they are legitimate material for the novel. But the student of history realizes that Zola, in his ardent desire to kill Roman Catholicism, has not presented a fair picture of the liberal position within the Roman Catholic Church, particularly that of Leo XIII, toward social issues of the time.

Roman Catholicism in the novels under survey is usually represented as being in opposition to the secular education of the Third Republic. Various illustrations of the educational attitudes prevailing in these

years may be found in the novels. Most of the opinions on education will be found in Vérité, although in the earlier novel Travail, education is also discussed. Luc Froment, the organizer of the collectivist town sets forth his view of teaching as follows:

> The master should have no other duty than that of awakening energy and encouraging the child's aptitude in one or another respect by provoking questions from him and enabling him to develop his personality. Deep in the human race there is an immense insatiable desire to learn and know, and this should be the one incentive to study without need of any rewards or punishments.[15]

A schoolmaster (not of Luc's communal school) believes in a different type of education. He feels it necessary to subject children to the discipline of liberty and to instill republican principles in them by force if necessary.[16] This schoolmaster Hermeline represents one of the educational views which were regarded as practical by avid nationalists during the Third Republic. He felt that Luc's dreams of educating free men were useles. How could the state make soldiers of free men who had not the discipline of a training to make them citizens of a glorious state?[17] In the communal school of Luc's village girls and boys were trained together with good results for both. It is true that education laws of the eighties provided for more extended coeducation than had previously been the case.

In Vérité, which is Zola's powerful novel with the elements of the Dreyfus case in the background, further reflections on education are

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[15] Travail, p. 147.

[16] Ibid., p. 145.

[17] Ibid., pp. 245-6.

presented. In the town of Maillebois, Zèphirin, the nephew of the Jewish communal schoolmaster, is murdered on the day he takes his First Communion. Zèphirin has gone to the school of the Capuchin Brothers in the town. Simon, the Jewish schoolmaster, is accused of the murder and sentenced to years of hard labor. Marc Froment, schoolmaster in the neighbouring town of Jonville, believes Simon innocent and along with Simon's brother David and other supporters devotes himself to seeking justice for the condemned man. After two trials (similar to the Dreyfus case) Simon is again declared guilty. In the Dreyfus case, justice was finally decreed by the courts in 1906. In this novel, a new generation of youth, trained in truth and justice, compensate for the sins of their grandparents by presenting a house to the schoolmaster Simon who has returned from years of imprisonment. In the Dreyfus affair the army, supported by the Church, was the main obstacle to justice. In Vérité the Church is the bogeyman. A Brother from the Capuchin school finally confesses his guilt in the slaying of Zèphirin, in a public confession in which he also condemns his fellow churchmen for their part in the crime by shielding his guilt.

The anti-semitism attacked in Vérité is also revealed in earlier novels of Zola, particularly L'Argent. Saccard, a speculator, reflects one type of anti-semitic feeling:

'Did anyone ever see a Jew working with his fingers?' he would ask. Were there any Jewish peasants and working men? 'No' he would say, 'labour disgraces, their religion almost forbids it, exalting only the exploitation of the labour of the others. Ah! the rogues!' [18]

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[18] L'Argent, p. 91.

After Saccard is financially ruined, he seeks to blame his personal misfortune upon other Jewish financiers in the Bourse, saying that they seek for financial rule of the entire world. Savin, a clerk for a local tax-collector in Vérité is another example of a prejudicial mind:

> Although the Jews prey on our land of France, I have nothing to say against that Monsieur Simon, unless it be that a Jew ought never to be allowed to be a schoolmaster. I hope that Le Petit Beaumontais [a newspaper in this town which never ceased declaring the guilt of Simon and attacking the Jews, similar to the type of journalism carried on by many French newspapers during the Dreyfus Affair] will start a campaign on that subject. ...Liberty and justice for all - such ought to be the watchwords of a good Republican. But the country alone must be considered ... [19]

When Marc and David sought the aid of a wealthy Jewish baron, they found him of an opinion like that of many Jews in France during the Dreyfus affair. The Baron Nathan advised David and Marc to let the wretched affair alone for after all it should be "France before everything else with her glorious past, and the ensemble of her traditions. We cannot hand her over to the Freemasons and the Cosmopolites ..." [20]

It was the hope of Marc to destroy such feelings of prejudice in the minds of the new generation. This could be done by education, especially in the elementary schools. Marc hoped to train the young people in such a way that they might:

> discharge their duty as freed citizens, possessed of knowledge and will power, released from all the absurd dogmas, errors, and super-

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[19] Vérité, p. 60.

[20] Ibid., p. 87.

stitions which destroy human liberty and dignity." [21]
This task of teaching the youth also included the erasing of the "errors and impostures of the Church and setting in their place truth as proclaimed by science, and human peace, based upon knowledge ..." [22]

Marc's wife, who had temporarily been estranged from him because of the Simon affair and her susceptibility to her religiously fanatic grandmother who was an anti-Simonite, returns to him when she knows the full facts of the case and realizes the innocence of Simon. The couple spend the remainder of their days happy in their teaching, Marc being in charge of the boys' school and Genevieve of the girls' school at Jonville. They dream of having both boys and girls together in one school as many of the neighbouring towns already have. Their two children, like many of their former pupils, become elementary school-teachers in turn. Thus Marc's hopes for new generations of French youth trained in reason and science without religion are on the way to being achieved.

Zola predicts the separation of the Church and State which was to come in 1905. He shows that the money, formerly paid to priests, is now doubling the salaries of elementary schoolmasters. With not so much accuracy in relation to actual events, Zola also shows the churches as practically empty, as:

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[21] Ibid., pp. 155-6.

[22] Ibid., p. 455

...theatres run on commercial lines, subsisting on the payments made by the spectators, the last admirers of the cermonies performed in them. [23]

The primary objection of the Church to the new education was its disregard of religion and emphasis on secular philosophies. Education was of course only one aspect of the secular philosophy with which the Church was confronted. The clerical attitude toward Science is shown in the thought of Abbé Marle of Travail:

...he clung strictly to the letter of the Church's dogmas, feeling certain that the whole of the ancient edifice would be swept away should science and the spirit of free examination ever effect a breach in it. [24]

In fairness to the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant Church as well, it should be noted that this opinion of Fundamentalism was only one answer to the whole problem of the conflict between Religion and Science, and that there were others. The philosophical and scientific tendencies of the age which the Church challenged will be discussed in the following chapter.

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[23] Ibid., p. 523.

[24] Travail, p. 86.

V. Scientific and Intellectual Attitudes in Zola's Novels

'Science' with its attendant philosophies was the intellectual keynote of the nineteenth century, officially recognized by the world perhaps in 1859 with the publication of Charles Darwin's Origin of Species. The next few decades saw the development of the natural sciences, mathematics, biology, chemistry, physiology to an extent hitherto unknown. The application of the scientific method by historians, economists, political scientists, sociologists, resulted in a classification of "social sciences". The materialistic approach toward life influenced the fine arts, particularly literature and painting. Applied science gave rise to countless inventions for modern living - steam railways, telegraphic communications, the bicycle, chemical inventions, the utilization of electricity in homes and factories. Industry was mechanized with the advent of the Diesel engine and new methods of discovering and employing natural resources such as iron and copper. Agriculture was revolutionized by the introduction of farm machinery such as the reaper and binder and by methods of large scale farming and crop rotation. Attendant with the rise of the theoretical and practical sciences was the emphasis on the philosophy of positivism with its belief that everything of value in life could be gained by man with the proper use of his reason and the aid of science. Religion was found to be a cumbersome feature of man's life. Rather than

to a divinity in heaven, man would now bow to his material idols on earth. This period of years, glossed in the climate of positivism and pragmatism, was exuberant in its optimism. With the natural and physical scientist and the social scientist proclaiming to the world all the known facts of the material world and humanity, it was believed that man surely could make his heaven upon earth. In France from 1855 to 1900 there were at least eight expositions which were dazzling displays of the results of science in practical areas. In the decade of the nineties, there was somewhat of a departure from realism in literature. Generally speaking, however, the whole scientific attitude and optimistic material philosophy has not been seriously questioned until the present century, and to a greater extent, only within the last ten years.

Zola's writings reflect this entire movement in several ways. First, his literary approach was one of observation and experiment. In addition to merely picturing the world about him, he sought to experiment with it by studying the physiological effects of heredity on his Rougon-Macquart family. As well as displaying an interest in heredity, Zola attempted sociological studies, the effects of drunkenness in L'Assommoir; the life of a courtesan in Nana; the problem of a decreasing birth rate in Fécondité. Second, Zola draws characters who represent the philosophy of the time.

Before looking at the personal interest of Zola in science, a few illustrations of characters who are imbued with the new philosophy may be of value. In one of Zola's earliest novels, Madeleine Férat, he illustrates a scientist who has made science his mistress. This

man shut himself up in his laboratory with his science, refusing himself any social life. When he died, his laboratory was found in ruins, destroyed from a desire to let no one else have his mistress. [1] Scientists in later novels, however, are men who are giving their knowledge to humanity. The scientist Bertheroy [2] of Paris is one of Zola's best characterizations of the attitude of the scientist toward life about him. Bertheroy in conversation with his anarchist friends explains the superiority of science to political action:

> ...I feel only contempt for the vain agitation of politics, whether they be revolutionary or conservative. Does not science suffice? Why hasten the times when one single step of science brings humanity nearer to the goal of truth and justice than do a hundred years of politics and social revolt? Why, it is science alone which sweeps away dogmas, casts down gods, and creates light and happiness. And I, Member of the Institute as I am decorated and possessed of means, I am the only true "evolutionist!"[3]

Most of Zola's scientist characters are non-political like Bertheroy. In Travail the scientist Jordan has views similar to Bertheroy:

> ...he closed his ears to the contemporary battle, and shut himself up in his laboratory, where, as he expressed it, he manufactured happiness for to-morrow. [4]

Jordan, who has experimented with electrical power all his life, succeeds in utilizing it for Luc's model village. Luc, another firm believer in science, tells Jordan in conversation:

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[2] see page 53, chapter three.

[3] Paris, p. 116.

[4] Travail, p. 117.

* [1] Emile Zola, Madeleine Férat, no translator given (London, 1888), p. 97.

Science remains the great revolutionary. [these words are almost a refrain in Zola's passages on science] ...Would our town of Beauclair, now all comfort and solidarity, have been possible as yet if you had not placed at its disposal that electric power which has become the necessary agent of all work, all social life. Science, truth, will alone emancipate man, make him master of his destiny, and give him sovereignty over the world by reducing the natural forces to the status of obedient servants. [5]

Ideas on evolution also play a part in Zola's novels. Two of the best examples may be found in the characters of Etienne in Germinal and Maurice in La Débâcle. Etienne, it will be remembered, was acquiring a smattering of knowledge on social systems and problems. In his reading it was inevitable that he should get to Darwin. Then he evolved a new revolutionary idea of the struggle for life "the lean devouring the fat, the muscular multitude devouring the flabby bourgeoisie":

'Suppose,' said he, 'that present society should no longer exist, that the very dregs of it were swept away. ...Was it not more than likely that the new society which would spring up would be spoiled by the same injustice that prevailed already: that some would be diseased, others in good health, some, more skillful and intelligent, fattening upon everything, and the remainder, stupid and lazy, reduced to slavery again?' [6]

In Etienne's analysis of society, the reader can observe the biological theory of evolution transferred to social life. Maurice, the soldier of La Débâcle has also accepted the application of biological evolution to life in totality. He sees war as inevitable and necessary to the existence of nations thinking in terms of the following passage:

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[5] Ibid., pp. 475-6.

[6] Germinal, pp. 376-7.

Is not life itself an incessant battle, which does not flag, even for a second? Continuous fighting, the victory of the fittest, the maintenance and renewal of strength by action, and the resuscitation of juvenescent life from death itself - are not these the very essence of the natural law? [7]

In addition to showing such views as the above which are favourable to science, Zola exhibits attitudes of ordinary folk in opposition to the scientific attitude. In La Terre, the village schoolmaster harangues the peasants for their failure to advance with the ideas of the time. His words suggest a possible reluctance of the peasants to accept new methods of agriculture as well as the French peasant's love for his land:

You are a perishing and worn-out race. Your imbecile love of the soil has eaten you up. ...For centuries past you have been wedded to the soil, and it has always betrayed you. Look at America! There the agriculturist is master of the soil. He isn't bound to it by any family ties, any sentimental considerations; as soon as one plot is exhausted, he goes further on and takes another. ...[8]

In the words of Fouan, an old peasant, the reader views the reaction of some peasants to new ways:

Come, hang you and your science! The more a man knows the worse he gets on. I tell you the land gave a better yeidl fifty years ago. It gets angry at being worried so, and never gives more than it chooses, the beggar! [9]

In La Joie de Vivre a young man is portrayed who has dabbled in music, medicine and chemistry. In answer to Lazare's statement showing

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[7] La Débâcle, p. 9.

[8] La Terre, p. 424.

[9] Ibid., pp. 72-3.

his discouragement with science, the village doctor tells him:

> Ah! I recognize in that remark of yours the young man of to-day, who has nibbled at the sciences and filled himself with discontent because they have not enabled him to satisfy his old ideas of the absolute. ...You want to discover in the sciences, at the first attempt and all alone, all the truths, while we are content to go on painfully and slowly deciphering them, recognizing that it will take an eternity before they are thoroughly mastered. ... [10]

In Le Docteur Pascal, the final novel of the Rougon-Macquart series, Dr. Pascal (like Zola) has studied the entire Rougon-Macquart family. Pascal is one of the three sons of Félicité and Pierre Rougon who have been introduced to the reader in La Fortune des Rougon, discussed in chapter three. In Le Docteur Pascal, Félicité makes a visit to her son's home and tries to obtain the documents he has collected on the family in order that she may destroy them. In conversation with Pascal's niece who lives with him, Félicité tells her:

> No, no such thing as a family would be possible should people begin dissecting and anlyzing this and that - the nerves of one, and the muscles of another. It would disgust one with life. ...They the scientists destroy respect, they destroy family ties, they destroy God--- [11]

While Félicité's comments show an antagonism to Pascal's work because of her family being involved they also suggest a common criticism of science, i.e., 'the dissection of human life to a mere mechanism reduces its dignity and humanity'. Pascal's niece, Clotilde, becomes his helpmate and later has a child by him. Pascal finally trains her young mind to believe in his science but not without objection from her in the learning process. The following statement of Clotilde is another example

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[10] La Joie de Vivre, p. 221.

[11] Emile Zola, Le Docteur Pascal, translated by Ernest A. Vizetelly (London, 1925), p. 18.

of an argument against science:

> At all events, science has swept everything away, the earth is bare, the heavens are empty, and so what is to become of me, even supposing that science be not responsible for the hopes I have conceived. ... Where am I to find a firm foundation on which I may build my house, since the old world has been demolished and such little speed is shown in forming the new one? ... Since science is too slow ... we prefer to turn back - yes, to plunge anew into the beliefs of former times, which during long, long centuries sufficed for the happiness of the world.[12]

The book Le Docteur Pascal personifies Zola's purpose in writing the Rougon-Macquart series. The family, of which Pascal is a part and which is the externally uniting factor in the twenty volumes, has been studied by Pascal in the particular novel and by Zola in the whole series. Adelaide Fouque, Aund Dide, who was married in 1786 to Rougon, a gardener, had one son by him (Pierre Rougon). After her husband's death, she had two children by a lover Macquart, who was a smuggler addicted to drink as well as being mentally unbalanced. These characters are introduced in La Fortune des Rougon and from the original family some thirty-two major characters generate whose various fortunes are traced in the later novels of the series. Aunt Dide, the original source, who is committed to an asylum in La Fortune des Rougon dies in the novel Le Docteur Pascal at the age of 105. The characters who spring from this family are a combination of neurotics, alcoholics, consumptives, gamblers, cripples such as Gervaise Macquart of L'Assommoir who was conceived in a mood of drunkenness by her parents and consequently is lame. Nearly all the family with few exceptions are possesses with some physical imperfections. In this paper, a historical

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[12] Ibid., p. 91.

essay, it would be superfluous to relate the physical degeneracies of this family. It is important to mention them, however, for they show that Zola was greatly influenced by doctrines of science, particularly heredity. His attempt to show the effects of heredity upon several generations also implies the belief that the novelist may use science as his domain in addition to other features of modern life. The type of study Zola attempted on this large scale was earlier manifested in Thérèse Raquin.[13] In this novel, a married woman and her lover brutally drowned the husband and succeeded in making the death appear to be accidental. Later the couple marry but are unable to find happiness being obsessed with the vision of the drowning man. In the Preface to this novel Zola had stated:

> I have selected persons absolutely swayed by their nerves and blood, deprived of free will, impelled in every action of life, by the fatal lusts of the flesh. I have sought to follow these brutes, step by step, in the secret labour of their passions, in the impulsion of their instincts, in the cerebral disorder resulting from the excessive strain on their nerves.[14]

I repeat that the primary purpose of an illustration like the above to the historian is that it reveals the impact of the new sciences upon one literary representative of the age.

Several novels in the Rougon-Macquart series, in addition to presenting physiological tendencies, show a sociological interest. One of these is L'Assommoir, a study of drunkenness. "Assommoir" literally means a heavy bludgeon but may be applied to any weapon that will fell,

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[13] Emile Zola, Thérèse Raquin, translated by Edward Vizetelly (London, 1910).

[14] Ibid., ix, Preface.

stun, or kill.[15] As Zola used the term, it came to mean drink itself. Gervaise Macquart of the story is a laundry worker who has had two children by a lover. When he deserts her, she marries a workman Coupeau. For a time their fortunes reach a point enabling Gervaise to set up her own laundry shop and become a businesswoman with girls working for her. Coupeau, who is a roof worker, has a bad fall from a roof and during his recuperation, by gradual degrees, becomes a drunkard who loses all his orderly habits and sense of respectability. The entire family life disintegrates; the lover comes back and moves in with Gervaise and Coupeau; the daughter Nana roams the streets selling flowers and later herself; Gervaise, whose father had been an alcoholic succumbs to "assommoir" and loses her shop; Coupeau becomes mentally ill and is committed to a hospital where he dies of delirium tremens; finally Gervaise, ruined by drink, dies. There is no doubt that Zola has brutally pictured the ill effects of drink in a sincere attemot, I believe, to dramatize the ill-effects of excessive drinking.

Into the atmosphere of L'Assommoir, Nana was born to Gervaise and Coupeau.[16] She later becomes the central figure of the novel Nana.

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[15]The translator states (v-vi, Introduction) that the name "assommoir" was first given to a tavern in a faubourg in Paris. The idea was that the drams consumed at this tavern would deal one a knockdown blow. In time, states Vizetelly, among the working classes of Paris any low drinking haunt noted for its spirits became known as an assommoir. Josephson (page 220) asserts that taverns in the poor quarters were called "zinc," "bouge", "bistro" but probably were not commonly known as "assommoir" until after the publication of Zola's novel. I am inclined to agree with the latter evaluation. It is an interesting point for it reveals Zola's desire to use words which are impressive and make an impact, a not unromantic effort on the part of this striving realist.

[16]Emile Zola, Nana, no translator given (Cleveland, 1946)

Heredity of alcoholism developed into mental and physical perversion are Nana's characteristics and she becomes a notorious prostitute, an example of Vice. This girl, who progresses through countless lovers, apparently has no explanation for her actions and no recognition of any immorality in her behavior. The book sold rapidly and was also severely criticized, but in the author's impression, it was merely a picture of another sore of society, and not a pornographic novel.

In a later novel, not of the series, Zola probes another social problem. This is Fécondité, the first of his social gospel works which has as its theme the glory of birth and large families.[17] The declining population of France has been a source of study for many historians and sociologists. France which stood second among the nations of Europe at the beginning of the nineteenth century had dropped to fifth place in the 1890's. For three years, 1890, 1891, and 1892 the deaths exceeded births by 38,000, 10,000, and 20,000. After that time, the excess of births reappeared but to a small extent.[18] Zola's novel suggests the problem and the solution set forth by some of his characters is unrestricted procreation, this being one of the rare instances in which Zola agreed with the Catholic Church. Mathieu Froment, an educated draughtsman, leaves his job in a Parisian factory to retire to the country and live upon the soil. Mathieu and Marianne, his wife, continue rearing and bearing their twelve children who in turn marry and raise families until at the end of the story, some three hundred

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[17] Emile Zola, Fécondité, translated by Ernest A. Vizetelly (London, 1925).

[18] Coubertin, op. cit., p. 385.

living descendants of Mathieu and Marianne participate in a great celebration of their seventieth wedding anniversary.

The book is actually a poem of life with countless refrains glorifying fruitfulness. Each time a child is born to Mathieu and Marianne, one such refrain enters the story:

> And 'twas ever the great work, the good work, the work of fruitfulness spreading, thanks to the earth and thanks to woman, both victorious over destruction, offering fresh means of subsistence each time a fresh child was born, and loving, willing, battling, toiling even amidst suffering, and ever tending to increase of life and increase of hope. [19]

Along with the arrival of each child, Mathieu and Marianne increase their land holdings until they own a huge estate.

Mathieu and his friend Dr. Boutan are the exponents of fruitfulness. Dr. Boutan tries in vain to explain to Beauchêne, a factory owner, that the Malthusian theories were shattered, that "the calculations had been based on a possible, not a real, increase of population; in vain did he prove that the present-day economic crisis, the evil distribution of wealth under the capitalist system, was the one hateful cause of poverty." [20] In reply to Boutan's arguments for children, Beauchêne states:

> People pretend that we are not patriots because we don't leave troops of children behind us. But that is simply ridiculous; each serves the country in his own way. If the poor folks give it soldiers, we give it our capital - all the proceeds of our commerce and industry. A fine lot of good would it do the country if we were to ruin ourselves with big families, which would hamper us, prevent us from getting rich, and afterwards destroy whatever we create by subdividing it. With out laws and customs there can be no substantial fortune unless a family is limited to one son. [21]

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[19] Fécondité, p. 181.

[20] Ibid., p. 12.

[21] Ibid., pp. 298-9.

In France the inheritance laws required the subdivision of property among all the heirs, thus the reader can understand why Beauchêne wished to have only one son who could inherit his entire fortune intact. Beauchêne's attitude that only the working classes had many children is shown in an earlier novel in which a woman of the middle class makes the following statement:

It's only the working classes that beget children as a hen lays eggs, regardless of what it will cost them. It's true, they turn them loose into the street like so many flocks of sheep. I declare it makes one sick. [22]

Another view in opposition to those held by Boutan and Mathieu is illustrated in the words of a novelist character, Santerre:

No, no; Paris simply wishes to remain stationary, and it wishes this precisely because it is the most intelligent, most highly civilized city in the world. The more nations advance in civilization the smaller becomes their birth-rate. We are simply giving the world an example of high culture, superior intelligence, and other nations will certainly follow that example when in turn they also attain to our state of perfection. [23]

Dr. Boutan also criticizes the custom among mothers of the upper classes of giving their children to wet-nurses until they are weaned. His remarks suggest that one reason for the falling birth rate might have been the absence of desire by women to have children and to care for them:

But how would you have a Parisienne of the wealthy bourgeoisie undertake the duty, the long brave task of nursing a child, when she leads the life she does, what with receptions and dinners and soirees, and absences and social obligations of all sorts? [24]

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[22] Pot Bouille, p. 74.

[23] Fécondité, p. 36.

[24] Ibid., p. 123.

These preceding examples of a 'pseudo-sociological' approach in some of the novels reflect an awareness of social problems on the part of their author as well as an awareness of their existence in France. Particularly, the illustration from Fécondité appear to elaborate very well on a problem in France of these years and give opinions which are very often found in any discussion of the decreasing population of France.

In the area of intellectual attitudes, most of such material in the novels pertains to science. There are occasional references to the new ideas of art. L'Oeuvre is a novel dealing with artists and writers in Paris and is also autobiographical of Zola's early days in the Latin Quarter.[25] Besides drawing upon his own life, Zola used material concerning many of his friends of those early years in Paris - Paul Alexis, Philippe Solari, Manet, Guillemet, Paul Cézanne. This novel centers on the efforts of its main character, Claude Lantier, to paint a masterpiece, his despair in not being able to achieve perfection, and consequent suicide. Lantier is first introduced to the reader of the Rougon-Macquart series in Le Ventre de Paris, where he is shown working on many of his early paintings in the city markets. The new approach in art is suggested by the following picture describing one of Lantier's ambitions:

> For a long time he dreamt of a colossal picture which should represent the loves of Cadine and Marjolin [two wayward youths of the marketplace] in the central markets, amidst the vegetables, the fish, and the meat. ...In this conception he saw a manifesto proclaiming the positivism of art - modern art, experimental and materialistic.[26]

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[25] Emile Zola, L'Oeuvre, translated by Katherine Woods (New York, n.p. 1946)

[26] Le Ventre de Paris, 187-8.

In L'Oeuvre, at one time, Claude is working on a picture for the Salon, In the Open Air, and finds himself unable to get the exact lighting, exclaiming to his novelist friend Sandoz (Zola):

Damn it all, the thing's still dark, I've got that cursed Delacroix in my eye! And then there - that hand, that's Courbet. Damn, we keep drenching everything with a romantic sauce! [27]

In sympathy with the artist, Sandoz shrugs his shoulders hopelessly for he too regrets having been born at the confluence of Hugo and Balzac. Claude's picture named above was refused by the jury of the Salon but it was exhibited in the Salon des Refusés. This was actually created by Napoleon III in 1863 as an outlet for exhibition by those painters who were refused by the Salon. In 1866 Zola wrote a series of articles called Mon Salon in L'Evènement attacking the jury of the Salon for refusing the paintings of the young artists, particularly of Manet and of the whole "Open Air" school. The painting of Claude Lantier mentioned above depicts a nude on the grass surrounded by fully clothed men; the description is most similar to Manet's Lunch on the Grass which shows the two picknicking couples, one of the women being unclothed.

Every week the group of artists and writers of this novel gather in Sandoz' apartment to have supper and discuss their theories of art. One evening Sandoz expresses his ideas which are actually those Zola came to proclaim in regard to literature:

Physiology, psychology - the words mean nothing; for the one has penetrated the other; today the two are one; the mechanism of man ends by being the sum total of all his functions. Oh, there is the formula; and it is the sole basis for our modern revolution; it is the death of the old society and the birth of the new; and it is

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[27] L'Oeuvre, p. 67.

the growth of a new art, in this new soil. They'll see! They'll see the literature that will be the offsrping of science and democracy, in this coming age! [28]

In the novels there are a few excellent references to the type of literature that the novelist Sandoz speaks of in the above passage. In Pot Bouille a lady is shown who likes to read romantic tales. One day her neighbour from whom she borrows books gives her a Balzac novel and Marie tells him: "You're giving me another one of Balzac's. No, take it back; his tales are too much like real life!" [29] In Son Excellence Eugène Rougon, Eugène Rougon, alluding to Flaubert's Madame Bovary, states to a friend of his:

> But our present-day novelists have adopted a style which is full of suggestiveness, a manner of describing things which makes it appear as if they were actually going on before you. They call that art. To me it seems to be simply indecency and bad taste. [30]

Balzac and Flaubert are considered precursors of the 'naturalists' and these remarks are suggestive of the type of criticism that would be made of most all of Zola's works as well as the writings of other naturalists.

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[28] Ibid., p. 103.

[29] Pot Bouille, p. 249.

[30] Son Excellence Eugène Rougon, p. 103.

VI. Social Pictures in Zola's Novels

In addition to illustrations of prevailing ideas of the last half of the nineteenth century portrayed in Zola's novels, the student of history will find many pictures of society which cannot be obtained from general history books of the period. The novelist must always present his story in a material setting - homes, cities, shops, or wherever the action is taking place. Zola's novels have long detailed descriptions of the material setting of his stories. Such social pictures could very well provide material for a study in themselves. Because of the abundance of material of this type in the novels, I have chosen to present a few of those pictures which are peculiar to the French scene and which would appear to add to the understanding of the student of history. Because Zola's novels involve many types of people as well as locales, a variety of social pictures are available.

One of the interesting areas of social life is the entertainment patterns of different groups of people. In the home of Madame Raquin, a Parisian small shopkeeper (the mother-in-law of Thérèse Raquin) the reader sees one form of social entertainment. Once a week four or five friends of the neighbourhood come to Madame Raquin's home for a social evening. The following description depicts one of these evenings:

> At seven o'clock Madame Raquin lit the fire, set the lamp in the centre of the table, placed a box of dominoes beside it, and wiped the tea

service in the sideboard. [precisely at eight o'clock, the guests arrived] When the party was complete, Madame Raquin poured out the tea, Camille emptied the box of dominoes on the American-cloth table cover, and every one became deeply interested in their hands. Henceforth nothing could be heard but the jingle of the dominoes. At the end of each game, the players quarrelled for two or three minutes, then mournful silence was resumed, broken by the sharp clanks of the dominoes. [at precisely 11 o'clock the guests left] [1]

In the country town of Bonneville, at the home of the Chanteaus, every Saturday afternoon the village doctor and the village priest come to luncheon. After the meal, the doctor and priest play draughts with old Chanteau who is usually in his wheel-chair since he suffers from the gout. [2] In the mining village portrayed in Germinal the people spend many social evenings in the "Jolly Good Fellow", a combination tavern and ballroom. Along the walls of the ballroom are hung the shields bearing the names of various corporation saints - Saint Eloi, the patron of the iron puddlers, Saint Crépin, the patron of the cobblers, Saint Barbe, the patronness of the miners. [3]

L'Assommoir contains vivid pictures of the social life of the working classes of Paris. The day Gervaise and Coupeau are married is full of celebration. After a civil ceremony in the morning, the witnesses are treated to bread, ham, and wine at a wine shop. Then the other guests who have been invited to the celebration arrive. In order to entertain themselves before the dinner, one member of the

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[1] Thérèse Raquin, pp. 23-4.

[2] La Joie de Vivre, p. 217.

[3] Germinal, p. 129.

group suggests that they visit the art museum. The entire party walks through the streets of Paris to a museum where they spend several hours. Then, after climbing the tower of the Place Vendome they return to a restaurant, the "Silver Windmill" where an evening of feasting is enjoyed. The feast consists of vermicelli soup, meat pie, rabbit stew, frosted eggs, cheeses, fruits, and wines.[4] Later in the story, after Gervaise and Coupeau have saved enough money to buy the shop where Gervaise sets up her laundry, they display their newly found wealth and respectability to the neighbourhood in a celebration on Gervaise's saint's day. The laundry is turned into a party room and the evening of gaiety begins when each of the guests arrive bringing either bouquets or potted plants for Gervaise. A huge dinner of a fat roast goose, veal blanquettes (" veal chopped into small pieces, stewed with onions, with a light yellow sauce coloured with egg yolks, thickened with flour, garnished with mushrooms"), green peas and bacon, fruits and wine, leaves all of the guests in a satisfied and merry mood and the evening is concluded with singing of songs.[5]

A more elaborate display of French food is described in a huge supper party Nana has, after having "arrived" in the Paris theatrical world. From about ten in the evening until five a.m. the next morning, the guests enjoy asparagus soup, clear soup, rissoles of young rabbit

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[4] L'Assommoir, pp. 56-87, passim.

[5] Ibid., pp. 182-5, passim.

with truffles, "niokys", powdered cheese, pullets à la Maréchale, fillets of sole with shallot sauce, escalopes of Strasbourg pate, hot and cold roasts, and for dessert, if the reader is still with me, pineapple fritters à la Pompadour, cepes à l'Italienne.[6]

Associated with entertainment are the receptions given by the various women in Zola's novels. Almost every mistress of a house has a day of entertaining every week whether it be her "Tuesdays, Thursdays, or Fridays". Many of the women are "at home" to their lady friends on certain afternoons and to mixed company on certain evenings. In Pot Bouille Madame Josserand is one who entertains one evening a week. Her husband who is merely a cashier has to write addresses for periodicals at night in order that his wife may have her Tuesdays. One of her main objectives in this entertaining is to try to get her two daughters married. The guests mingle and are then forced to listen to daughter Berthe play the piano and to say the proper things about the paintings of daughter Hortense. The tea consists of a brioche [a bun or cake from the baker's] sandwiches, little cakes, biscuits and butter, tea and red currant syrup.[7] Madame Duveyrier who lives in the same apartment house as the Josserands also has her evenings. Being a music enthusiast, she always gathers all the young men with voices around the piano and the evenings frequently end with choruses by the group.[8]

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[6] Nana, pp. 96-108, passim.

[7] Pot Bouille, p. 60.

[8] Ibid., p. 439 for a description of one such evening of Madame Duveyrier.

In La Curée the upper classes are frequently pictured at fancy dress balls. At many of them the ladies enact plays as part of the evening's entertainment. Descriptions of Paris during the 1867 Exhibition are presented in L'Argent:

> The banners of the Exhibition flapping in the sunlight, the illuminations and orchestras of the Champ de Mars, the crowds from all over the world which streamed along the streets, completed the intoxications of the Parisians, made them dream alike of inexhaustible wealth and sovereign dominion.[9]

All of Paris was welcoming the majesties of Russia, Austria, Turkey, Prussia, while the dense crowd at the Exhibition made a "popular success of the huge, sombre Krupp guns, which Germany exhibited there."[10] This same Paris was so changed in appearance only a few years later with the advent of the war that Zola could write in La Débâcle of the seige:

> Then another long week went by. Paris was suffering uncomplainingly. The shops were no longer opened, the few foot passengers no longer met a single vehicle in the deserted streets. Forty thousand horses had been eaten; dogs, cats, and rats were fetching high prices. Since the dearth of wheat had set in, the bread, partially compounded of rice and oats, was black, viscous, and difficult of digestion ...[11]

One of the necessities of daily life is the washing. In the novels the reader is given colorful pictures of this custom before the days of automatic laundries. In L'Assommoir there is a wash house in the neighbourhood to which Gervaise takes her wash. On either side of a central alley, there are 'batteries' or washing places where

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[9] L'Argent, p. 240.

[10] Ibid., p. 267.

[11] La Débâcle, p. 483.

the women stand with their sleeves rolled, and skirts tucked up showing their coloured stockings and heavy shoes. The woman who manages the shop sits in a small closet partition surrounded with account books, bars of soap, balls of blue in glass jars, and pounds of soda in packets. As Gervaise comes in, she gets a beetle (a wooden hammer-like device used to beat the clothes), soap, and soda and pays the woman in charge according to the number of buckets of hot water she uses. [12] In Le Rêve, the story of a young girl who has been adopted by two embroideres of church vestments, the reader is given another picture of the washing ritual, this time occuring in a small town. Every fourth months the Hubertines lay aside all embroidery for four days or so in order to do the wash. After Madame Hubertine has prepared the lye, Angelique soaps and rinses the linen in the river and then lays it on the grass covered with small stones to dry in the open sunlight. [13] A similar process is seen in the washing of the linen in a farm home described in La Terre:

> The sisters had scoured it on the evening before, and since the morning the ash liquor, scented with orris root, had been boiling in a cauldron hanging from the pot-hook over a clear, poplar wood fire. With bare arms, and her skirts tucked up, Lise, with the aid of a yellow earthen jug, was drawing the water off and wetting the linen, with which the bucking-tub was filled - the sheets at the bottom, then the house-cloths, then the body linen, and, at the top of all, some other sheets. [14]

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[12] L'Assommoir, p. 12.

[13] Emile Zola, Le Rêve, translated by Eliza E. Chase (London, 1893), p. 95.

[14] Germinal, p. 21.

In Germinal, the mining story, many pictures of collier life are presented. Every morning, one by one the lights in the village disappear and doors bang as the miners leave the lifeless village to go to the Voreaux pit. The mine itself assumes the proportions of a personality as noted in the following description of the cage taking miners down:

> It plunged again, and in another four minutes reappeared for a fresh load. And so things went on for more than half an hour, during which the shaft continued swallowing its human prey, in more or less gluttonous fashion according to the depth of the junction to which the cage descended. Every famished, like some giant who was capable of digesting a whole nation, it swallowed and swallowed, while the gloom remained lifeless and the cage kept reappearing from the abyss amid the same voracious silence. [15]

Child and woman labor in the mine is also depicted. One such example is a young girl, Catherine, aged fifteen, who works underground:

> She also perspired and panted, and at times her joints cracked, but she uttered no complaint. She had become callous from habit, as if it were the common lot of all to live like this, bent in twain [she has been shown with her back arched and her hands low, getting through a narrow passageway, that she seemed almost like a dwarf animal] [16]

The village itself consists of identical brick houses with thin walls, each with its garden plot, a company store, school, church, and several inns.

A common picture the reader meets throughout the novels is that of country churches where quite often a woman has charge of keeping the church clean and ringing the bell. One such example is the church

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[15] Germinal, p. 21.

[16] Ibid., p. 35.

of Abbé Mouret whose housekeeper La Teuse cleans the church every morning, has charge of the altar linens, and rings the bell for services:

The bare, worn bell-rope dangled from the ceiling near the confessional and ended in a big knot greasy from handling. Again and again, with regular jumps, she hung herself upon it; and then let her whole bulky figure go with it, whirling in her petticoats, her cap awry, and her blood rushing to her broad face. [17]

Among the social scenes in Zola's novels are various types of shops. One type of "assommoir" which has been introduced in chapter five is described as follows:

On either side of the doorway, planted in the two halves of a barrel, were some dusty oleanders. [a kind of evergreen shrub with flowers]. The huge bar, with its rows of classes, its filter and pewter measures, stretched away to the left on intering. ...Bottles of liquers, glass jars full of preserved fruits, all kinds of phials neatly arranged on shelves, covered the walls, ... [18]

In Le Ventre de Paris, the novel with its locale in the city markets, an interesting description of the front of the pork-butcher's shop, one of the many businesses in the market, is found:

On two panels, one on each side of the shop-front, and both, like the board above, covered with glass, were paintings representing various chubby little cupids playing amidst boars' heads, pork chops, and strings of sausages. ...Down below, quite close to the window, jars of preserved sausage - meat were interspersed with pots of mustard. Above these were some small, plump, boned hams, golden with their dressings of toasted bread-crumbs. ...Next ... some containing preserved Strasburg tongues, enclosed in bladders coloured a bright red and varnished ... then there were black-puddings ... Lyons sausage ... [19]

Au Bonheur des Dames is one of Zola's novels which deals entirely with the large commercial shops which were being built during the second

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[17] La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret, p. 1.

[18] L'Assommoir, p. 29.

[19] Le Ventre de Paris, pp. 37-8.

half of the nineteenth century.[20] This story depicts very well the large department store replacing smaller specialized shops, the impersonality of the large establishment, the bitterness of the old shopkeepers. Octave Mouret, manager of the Ladies' Paradise buys out all the small stores in the neighbourhood until his store occupies an entire city block. Every time the Ladies' Paradise adds a new department, the shopkeepers of the district received a new blow:

> Mademoiselle Tatin, at the lender-linen shop in the Passage Choiseul, had just been declared bankrupt. Quinette, the glover, could hardly hold out another six months; the furriers ... were obliged to sub-let a part of their premises; and if the Bedores, brother and sister, the hosiers, still kept on in the Rue Gaillon, they were evidently living on money saved formerly ...[21]

The opinion of one of the old shopkeepers, Baudu, a yardgoods proprietor, who though losing money in business, refused to sell to Mouret follows:

> Had any one ever seen such a thing? A draper's shop selling everything! Why not call it a bazaar at once? And the employees! a nice set they were too - a lot of puppies, who did their work like porters at a railway station, treating good and customers like so many parcels; leaving the shop or getting the sack at a moment's notice.[22]

The modern power of advertising and special sales were two methods used by Octave in building up his store. Once after the store was entirely prepared for a summer, sale, Octave ordered every-

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[20] Emile Zola, Au Bonheur des Dames, no translator given (London, 1886).

[21] Ibid., p. 194.

[22] Ibid., p. 23.

thing to be disarranged so that the buyers in looking for their necessary purchases would fall prey to other bargains. Elevators were installed, a refreshment bar, a children's department, a reading room - all the conveniences which we take for granted in any large department store - but they made the Ladies' Paradise the showplace of the Parisian shops.

The preceding pages have presented but a few of the illustrations from the array of social pictures given in Zola's novels. Had Zola been less interested in the physiological makeup of his characters, I believe that the student would be able to find more information on the social lives of the peasants, the working classes, the middle classes of these years. Unfortunately because of this undue emphasis on physiology and heredity (in my estimation) the peasants of La Terre, the workers of L'Assommoir, the middle classes of Pot Bouille, to select the outstanding example of this 'error', are shown as persons living in immorality and guided only by base physical passions. I do not believe that such analyses of people were true to contemporary life and therefore feel they are of little value to the student of history. However, the type of social picture examined in this chapter and the material surroundings which Zola portrays do give a valid insight for the historian.

VII. Conclusions

After completing this study, I have come to several major conclusions. First, I believe it has been shown that the historian can add significantly to his knowledge by making use of novels in addition to standard historical works. Second, the novels of Emile Zola have proved a fruitful source for this type of study.

This study has been valuable as well as interesting to pursue. I believe that I have gained much deeper insight into the French scene of the latter half of the nineteenth century. The novels have accentuated a peculiar feature of the political arena of France. It would appear that personalities like either of the Napoleons are able to capture the government of France primarily through the peasant majority, and by the wavering support of the bourgeois. Another unique element which has been shown and which I believe contributes to a fuller understanding of French history is the part of the radicals or extreme left in French politics. While many of the bourgeois were satisfied under either Napoleon III or the Republic, the radicals never gave their support to either government. This is, I feel, associated with the entire program of the radical in French politics and his distrust in politics and governmental procedure, as respresented by many of the labor groups in France.

The novels have revealed that the years of the Empire were synonymous with pleasure, gaiety, scandals, material prosperity. While the material prosperity carried over to the Republic, the free type of government permitted a degree of thought and speculation barely known during the reign of its predecessor. This study has led to a strengthening of a belief on my part that the last years of the century, despite their surface display of faith in Science, Truth, Reason, and their reliance upon material progress were really not exceptional years in the parade of history. This whole intellectual movement with its keynote of science was imbued with optimism, but at the same time I believe it reveals an uncertainty with modern-day living. It suggests an attempt to find a philosophy to balance the material world which suddenly seems to have sprung full force upon man. The culmination of this conflicting period was brought to the peoples of the world in World War I. This war as well as World War II are in some measure representative of the failure of present-day civilization to cope with itself.

There has been much criticism of the writings of Emile Zola, and naturally this study has been concluded with some personal impressions in regard to his literary merit. I wish to make it clear that my primary interest has not been in the literary quality of his work, but only in observation of how he has treated contemporary material in which the historian may be interested. Zola's novels have proved successful for this study for several reasons. The scope of his interests touched many aspects of modern life, and thus his novels

present a varied picture of French society. The great quantity of his work used has been exceptionally valuable, for the student has had many examples to draw from. Also, the personality of Zola himself as a representative figure of his age has been an interesting sidelight.

As there is much material of use in Zola's works, so is there a great deal which is of barren value to the student of history. This is not a general criticism, it should be noted, but only one which I make in relation to the purpose I had in studying the novels. The pseudo-scientific physiological study purported to be carried out in the Rougon-Macquart series is not of primary use to the historian, except insomuch as it reveals the influence of scientific developments upon the author. This poses an interesting problem in Zola himself. I discovered that the early novels present Zola's portrayals of man entirely in his physiological aspects and many of them are consequently morbid, and often, sordid studies. It was in these novels that heredity played a dominant role. The aim of Zola to also portray environment seems to be lacking in the series. In the later works, however, man is shown in a much more favourable light. In these works the environmental factor achieves more proportion. In the earlier works the characters appear to be moved only by physical needs and desires, their inherited physiological characteristics making them what they are and preventing them from adieving any stature. The later works, on the other hand, reveal that the heredity factor may be subordinate to the influence of environment. In these, man is seen attempting to do

something to improve his life. They also suggest the 'romantic' in the supposedly realist Zola, for many of the later works are really Utopian novels, presenting man in a society of the future. I would suggest that a strict adherence to both heredity and environment is to a certain extent incompatible. Zola seems to have shown this in his departure from the former. In this struggling for a philosophy, I believe that Zola represents the time in which he lived, which despite its dependence upon new philosophies, was actually very uncertain.

Another limitation in the use of Zola's novels for the student of history is his treatment of religion. Rather than a limitation, this should be called a qualification. I do not mean to infer that all of the author's statements on religion should be either accepted or rejected, but they should be understood in relation to the fact that Zola had an extraordinary anti-Roman Catholic attitude as well as a strong secular mind. With the exception of these primary limitations, I believe that the novels have served a useful purpose.

With regard to the literary quality of Zola, I do not think he was a great artist but nevertheless a very powerful and energetic one. His pre-occupation in the early novels with a physiological study imposed upon his stories and his pre-occupation in the later works with proclaiming a message contribute to his weakness as a literary artist. For in being so involved with an external covering for his stories, they often read like passages from either a textbook on science or on political economy. Consequently, I believe they are utterly lacking in humor and

the many manifestations of every-day living which a novelist is at liberty to portray. My appreciation for the talent which Zola undoubtedly had is, however, challenged upon reading a statement like the following; and I am compelled to reject it and question the merit of a historian who treats of Zola in this manner:

> Zola set the pace during the three decades after 1871 by relentlessly pursuing, through no fewer than twenty beefy tomes, the pathological case history of several generations of a sorry and degenerating French family, and by dashing off, in spells of perverted recreation, a somber novel on supposed Malthusian laws of population, a lugubrious one on labor conditions, and a very melodramatic one on hereditary drunkenness.[1]

Such an indictment completely denies any understanding of either the man or the period in which he lived. Anatole France's statement of Zola: "He was a moment of the conscience of mankind" is by far the most fitting I have yet found to describe this controversial Frenchman.

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[1]Carlton J. H. Hayes, A Generation of Materialism: 1871-1900 (New York, 1941), p. 153.

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The Ernest Vizetelly who translated most of Zola's works was the son of an English publisher and journalist. He was educated in France and was a newspaper correspondent at the time of the Franco-Prussian War. The father as well as another son, Edward, also translated some of Zola's works. The New International Encyclopedia, second edition (New York, 1930), states: "Most of Zola's works can be had in an excellent English translation by Vizetelly." The general nature of Vizetelly's translation, while slightly Victorian in style, has proved satisfactory for this type of study. Newer translations such as that by Katherine Woods of L'Oeuvre would be an invaluable asset to students of literature.
