

Introduction

The AIZEN editorial team is very proud to present Volume XXXIII (2022) of *Excavatio*, the *International Review for Multidisciplinary Approaches and Comparative Studies Related to Émile Zola and Naturalism Around the World*, which comprises eight articles from distinguished contributors from the United States, Canada, England, France, Hungary, and Israel. Titled *Émile Zola, Naturalism, and Protest*, this volume presents entirely recast versions of papers presented at the AIZEN's Thirtieth Anniversary Conference, with the same theme, held on the beautiful campus of the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa, March 3-5, 2022. Offering a wide variety of critical approaches to Émile Zola and naturalism – historical, political, scientific, feminist, and aesthetic – the volume celebrates the ongoing relevance of naturalism in our world today, underlining our indebtedness to the movement on a broad range of pertinent topics including literature's appeal to human sentiment, the impact of emotions like sympathy and empathy on social change, the unique struggles of women authors in the male-dominated literary market, authorship as a means to self-actuation, and naturalism's complex relationship with political movements like conservatism, socialism, and anarchy.

The first three articles, treating Zola and his works, share *emotion* as a common thread. In her article "Black Lives d'Émile Zola: Les expériences coloniales et les limites de l'empathie," Jennifer Yee examines Zola's allusions to (fictional) colonial medical experimentation in his novel *La Joie de vivre* (1883), requiring us to reconsider the impact of racial and geographical distance on empathy. More specifically, she studies the character of Cazenove, a doctor in the colonial navy who recalls his experiments with vivisection on Black women and his trials of various poisons on Asian subjects. Drawing on Claude Bernard's theories of experimental medicine as well as recent theoretical explorations of empathy by Carlo Ginzburg and Paul Bloom, Yee argues that the novel shows us the limits of empathy.

Shoshana-Rose Marzel offers a different take on Zola and emotion in her paper "La rhétorique émotionnelle de *Vérité*, dernière contestation de Zola." She aims to demonstrate how and why, in the master of Medan's last novel, *Vérité* (1903), he chooses the pathetic register of fiction to convince his reader to reject religious education in favor of secular education. She shows how he develops an active and persuasive form of writing by associating a broad range of emotions with the novel's plots, characters, and discourses, thereby provoking *affects* (mostly empathy and identification) that act on the reader morally and ideologically.

Alexandra Wettlaufer extends the topic of emotion to Zola's works in relation to those of the women authors George Sand and George Eliot, both targets of his criticism for their idealism and lack of devotion to the supposed "truth" of naturalism. In her piece "'Methinks He Doth Protest Too Much': Zola, Brunetière, and the Politics of Sympathy in George Sand and George Eliot," Wettlaufer shows how the conservative critic Ferdinand Brunetière used both female authors to challenge Zola's assumed position as a champion of the "real" and the "true." In keeping with his desire for an art that reflected a moral order, Brunetière in fact celebrated Sand and Eliot for their emotions, the "sympathie universelle" manifested in their novels, a quality he found conspicuously lacking in Zola.

The next two articles continue the theme of *women authors* seeking to gain legitimacy and affirm themselves in a male-dominated market. In her article "Marie Colombier, Female Authorship, and the Tenets of Nineteenth-Century Literary Naturalism," Elisabeth-Christine Muelsch treats the fascinating career of the little-known Colombier through the prism of naturalism. First, we see the early stages of her writer's journey, starting with her professional

transition from actress touring the U.S. with Sarah Bernhardt to a literary neophyte seeking collaboration with male authors to whom she never considers herself inferior. Next, the publication of her best-selling *Mémoires de Sarah Barnum* (1883), a work with decidedly naturalist elements, brings her the literary success that she craves, leading eventually to her alignment with the women writers of *La Fronde*. In this way, Muelsch paints a compelling picture of this unique writer's gradual formulation of a naturalism of her own.

Similarly, in her paper "Claims of Self-Liberation in Feminine Creole Fiction: A New Vision of Individualism Influenced by Naturalism," Élise Cantiran interprets the poetics of self in the Louisiana writers Kate Chopin and Léona Queyrouze as a challenge to the established order and a claim to freedom. Though both authors are familiar with Zola – Chopin's novel *The Awakening* is considered naturalist and Queyrouze wrote admiringly to the author – both distance themselves from the naturalist model with their emphasis on the individual. The rhetorical device of *captatio benevolentiae* and other strategies contribute to the promotion of self-actualization in a peaceful relationship with the Other. These female writers' works could be viewed as a kind of protest against the dominant thinking of the period, in that they use the literary medium to exalt singularity, a stance Cantiran views as their contribution to the developing notion of the "American Dream."

The last three articles also display a keen interest in the self but take us into a more overtly *political realm* by addressing the necessity of the individual to live with others and to navigate society's power structures. In his article "Anachronistic Visions of Socialism and Colonial Endeavor: The Influence of Saint-Simonian Thought on Émile Zola's Novels," Valentin Duquet revisits the writer's engagement with early nineteenth-century utopian socialism by examining the influence of Saint-Simonian thought on Zola's fiction. Combining close readings with historical contextualization based on the work of historians like Pamela Pilbeam and Ceri Crossley, Duquet shows that the utopian themes of Zola's *Quatre Évangiles* – the founding of proletarian cities, the settling of rural, so-called virgin lands, and the creation of new religions to unite people and reform society – closely track Saint-Simonian ideas and have antecedents in the author's early novels like *Le Ventre de Paris* (1873) and *Son Excellence Eugène Rougon* (1876).

In his unique piece "Regards croisés anarchistes sur Émile Zola et le naturalisme," Vittorio Frigerio examines the multi-valent image of Zola conveyed by figures from the libertarian movement of the fin-de-siècle period, the relatively obscure writers Han Ryner, Gérard de Lacaze-Duthiers, Victor Méric, and André Girard. By establishing connections among these authors' texts devoted to Zola, Frigerio pieces together a complex and contradictory image of the writer emerging in the works of intellectuals close to the anarchists' black flag, while offering insights into the position of naturalism in the development of their theories and their quest for a genuine anarchist literature.

Finally, in his article "*La Débâcle*, roman contestataire?" Francis Lacoste places Zola's novelistic treatment of the 1870 War and ensuing Commune in its political context. At that time, most contemporary writers, including the author himself, were wary of both Jean Jaures' ascending socialists as well as the anarchists who were orchestrating spectacular attacks on Paris. Lacoste shows that Zola's vigorous denouncement of the insurrection in *La Débâcle* (1890) belies a conformist and conservative point of view, but also that, shortly after the novel's publication, the Dreyfus Affair led him to call into question his former ideology, and to defend the individual against the arbitrary nature of power.

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Juliana Starr, President of the AIZEN
Co-Editor-in-Chief of *Excavatio*