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“Zola, Disciple of Huysmans?”

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In 1891, Zola shocked the French literary establishment by announcing that it was possible that Naturalism as he knew it was coming to an end. He declared that the future of literature would belong to “celui ou à ceux qui auront saisi l’âme de la société moderne...” and proposed a new kind of Naturalism—a “classicisme du naturalisme”—that would explore contemporary society’s soul. Zola’s sudden change of position is remarkable in its own right, but is doubly striking when placed in the context of the literary battles of 1891. His projects for the reform of Naturalism parallel those of J.-K. Huysmans, who, only a month earlier, had proposed a “naturalisme spiritualiste.” The “religion of science” that pervades Zola’s post-1891 novels, especially *Le Docteur Pascal*, *Les Trois Villes*, and *Les Quatre Evangiles*, echoes Huysmans’s demands for thematic and formal reform in Naturalism. We often call Huysmans a disciple of Zola, but were the roles reversed in the 1890s?

The story of Huysmans’s defection from Naturalism is well known and chronicled, so I will resume it only briefly. Although the press called him “un disciple de M. Zola,”¹ and although Zola called him “notre espoir,” the most promising member of the Medan group,² he was only an attentive student for the few years during which he addressed Zola as “maître”³ and wrote to him at least once a month. Despite their collaboration, the two often disagreed.⁴ The iconoclastic 1884 *A Rebours* distanced the two writers, and by 1890, while composing *Là-bas*, Huysmans was thoroughly fed up with both Zola and Naturalism. He wanted his novel to be “le dernier

décarcasement de cette butte croulante qu'on nomme le naturalisme!" (24 July 1890, letter 99: 200).⁵

Là-bas did strike a serious blow to the public's conception of Naturalism. The novel, which opens with a two-page invective against Naturalism, was serialized in *L'Echo de Paris*, beginning on February 16, 1891. Huysmans's protagonist, Durtal, feebly defends himself against his friend, Des Hermies, who maligns Naturalism as "du cloportisme" while accusing it of having sold out: "Il a vanté l'américanisme nouveau des moeurs, abouti à l'éloge de la force brutale, à l'apothéose du coffre-fort. Par un prodige d'humilité, il a révééré le goût nauséeux des foules, et, par cela même, il a répudié le style, rejeté toute pensée altièrre, tout élan vers le surnaturel et l'au-delà..." (XII, 1, 6-7). Des Hermies leaves, and Durtal, a former Naturalist, weighs his friend's criticism. Although he is fed up with the positivism and commercialism of Naturalism, he cannot envision a novel without its research, realistic details, and style. He hypothesizes about what could be done and concludes that Naturalism must change, it must broaden its horizons:

Il faudrait...garder la véracité du document, la précision du détail, la langue étoffée et nerveuse du réalisme, mais il faudrait aussi se faire puisatier d'âme et ne pas vouloir expliquer le mystère par les maladies des sens; le roman, si cela se pouvait, devrait se diviser de lui-même en deux parts, néanmoins soudées ou plutôt confondues, comme elles le sont dans la vie, celle de l'âme, celle du corps, et s'occuper de leurs réactifs, de leurs conflits, de leur entente. Il faudrait, en un mot, suivre la grande voie si profondément creusée par Zola, mais il serait nécessaire aussi de tracer en l'air un chemin parallèle, une autre route, d'atteindre les en deçà et les après, de faire, en un mot, un

naturalisme spiritualiste... (XII, 1, 10-11)

Durtal admires the documentation of Naturalism, yet wants to open it to the supernatural, to an exploration of both body and spirit: it will be a kind of “naturalisme spiritualiste” that will follow Zola’s route, but in the air.⁶ This tension between realism and the supernatural lies at the heart of *Là-bas*, a novel in which Huysmans follows Durtal’s spiritual transformation as he researches medieval and modern Satanism.

Là-bas was a scandalous best-seller. It inspired a great deal of public debate, especially since it was published in the same review and at the same time as Jules Huret’s first *Enquête sur l’évolution littéraire*, a series of sixty-four interviews conducted with major French authors from March 3 to July 5, 1891.⁷ This series, which asked its interviewees whether Naturalism was dead, was a phenomenal success read by all of Paris.⁸ Huret caused every non-Naturalist writer to agree that Zola’s brand of Naturalism was obsolete because it neglected humanity’s soul. When Zola was interviewed for this series on March 31, one month after *Là-bas* had begun to appear, even he admitted that it was possible that Naturalism was drawing to a close: “C’est possible. Nous avons tenu un gros morceau du siècle, nous n’avons pas à nous plaindre; et nous représentons un moment assez splendide dans l’évolution des idées au dix-neuvième siècle pour ne pas craindre d’envisager l’avenir” (XII, 653). Profiting from this admission Huret asked him what he thought the future of literature would hold. Zola’s response, with its focus on society’s “âme”—soul—strikingly resembles Huysmans’s call for a spiritual or mystical Naturalism that would open realist techniques to the invisible world demanded by fin de siècle readers:

...l’avenir appartiendra à celui ou à ceux qui auront saisi *l’âme de la société moderne*, qui, se dégageant des théories trop rigoureuses, consentiront à une acceptation plus logique, plus attendrie de la vie. Je crois à une peinture de la vérité plus large, plus complexe, à

une ouverture plus grande sur l'humanité, à *une sorte de classicisme du naturalisme*.

(XII, 654—my emphasis)

In 1891, Zola thus modified the Naturalist theory of his “Roman Expérimental” by calling for a less rigorous “classicisme du naturalisme,” an approach that would portray humanity’s spirit as well as its body. Like Huysmans’s “naturalisme spiritualiste,” Zola’s theory wanted to explore science and religion, body and soul.

In discussing the literature of the future with Huret, Huysmans was clearly on Zola’s mind: although he did not specifically tell Huret that Huysmans’s work would constitute the future of literature, he did mention him in the same breath as he reconsidered his own theory of Naturalism. After all, Huysmans was the writer he had previously called “notre espoir” and “un de nos romanciers de demain.”⁹ After a moment’s pause, Zola included himself in the future of literature: he told Huret that he would do what his critics wanted, given the time. “D’ailleurs, si j’ai le temps, je le ferai, moi, ce qu’ils veulent!” (XII, 655).¹⁰

Zola’s sudden interest in responding to his detractors, coupled with his enthusiasm for creating “un classicisme du naturalisme,” reveals the influence Huysmans held over him in this period. After all, only three months before the serialization of *Là-bas*, Zola had repeatedly mentioned that he wanted to abandon literature after finishing the *Rougon-Macquart* series. He wanted to profit from the rest he felt he had earned: “J’ai hâte d’avoir achevé ma carrière d’écrivain. Il faut que j’aie vite” (Speirs 61).¹¹

The sequence of events following Huysmans’s *Là-bas* is crucial to understanding Zola’s sudden change from literary scientist to literary prophet, from the science of the *Rougon-Macquart* series to the idealism of *Les Trois villes* and *Les Quatre Evangiles*. Although these

works have often been described as the decision of an aging author whose weakening faculties caused him to drift from the scientific focus of his earlier novels,¹² Zola's changing priorities are largely the result of the fin de siècle's ideological climate.

Zola had been under fire since the 1870s by critics such as Ferdinand Brunetière, who hounded him about his pessimism and lack of attention to pleasing the reader. These condemnations culminated in 1887 with the "Manifeste des Cinq," an open letter to *Le Figaro*, in which his former collaborators publicly renounced his methods as superficial and scientifically unsound. Brunetière jumped upon this event to declare "la banqueroute du naturalisme."¹³ Huysmans's February 1891 attack on Naturalism in *Là-bas* thus came as a breaking point for Zola: it summarized the criticism that had plagued him for the past twenty years and added fuel to his contemporaries' proclamation of Naturalism's death. Only one month later, in his own Huret interview, Zola gave in to contemporary demands for spirituality in literature by proposing a kind of "classical" Naturalism, an adaptation of Huysmans's ideas for a spiritual Naturalism.

Zola's decision to reform Naturalism took effect almost immediately. At the end of the summer—only four months later—Zola took his first trip to Lourdes, during a sightseeing trip in the Pyrenees with his wife. Their visit coincided with the national pilgrimage, which fascinated Zola.¹⁴ A few days later, in a September 20 letter to Henri Céard, he described his impressions of the city: "J'oubliais de vous dire que nous sommes allés à Lourdes, qui m'a conquis. Oh! le beau livre à faire avec cette ville extraordinaire! Cela me hante, j'ai passé une nuit à en bâtir le plan" (20 September 1891, letter 159: V, 199). His feverish night of writing produced the first nine pages of the preparatory file for *Lourdes*, the first segment of his *Trois villes* series. This manuscript, conserved at the Bibliothèque Méjanes in Aix-en-Provence, testifies to Zola's desire, at this point in time, to evoke the supernatural in modern life: "Un roman sur Lourdes. —En ce

moment de mysticité, de révolte contre la science, un admirable sujet: montrer le besoin de surnaturel persistant chez l'homme, avec cette extraordinaire histoire de Bernadette...et là retrouver, suivre, étudier et peindre ce duel incessant entre la science et le besoin du surnaturel..." (Bibliothèque Méjanes, MS1456, fol 209). This document clarifies Zola's decision to change the focus of his work: he reacts against fin de siècle ideology, "ce moment de mysticité, de révolte contre la science." While the tensions between science and religion haunt all of Zola's work, it is only in his later works that he explicitly explores 1890s French society and responds to its claims that science (and Naturalism) is bankrupt. Only five months after the publication of Huysmans's *Là-bas*, Zola had decided to follow his former disciple. He no longer wanted to retire, but now planned to open the Naturalist novel, with its traditional emphasis on science, to issues of spirituality. Like Huysmans's *Là-bas*, which explored the fin de siècle's battle between science and Satanism, Zola, too, wanted his novel to paint the duel between science and religion.

Despite his enthusiasm for the new project, he still had two *Rougon-Macquart* novels to finish: *La Débâcle*, whose composition he had begun in July, before his trip to Lourdes, and *Le Docteur Pascal*. After finishing *La Débâcle*, his letters reflect a new urgency to complete the series. In an 1892 letter to Van Santen Kolff, for example, he wrote: "J'ai hâte de me remettre au travail, pour que ma terrible série soit enfin terminée dans un an" (Letter 267: VII, 289). *Le Docteur Pascal*, which he had already begun researching, and whose composition he started in December 1892, has often been recognized as a transitional work, which closes the *Rougon-Macquart* and introduces the *Trois Villes* series.¹⁵ Jacques Noiray has remarked, however, that the similarities between *Lourdes* and *Le Docteur Pascal* are striking and so much so that—in many respects—*Lourdes* can be considered the precursor to *Le Docteur Pascal* ("Notice" 589).

The first novel of the *Trois Villes* series bears striking similarities to *Là-bas* and to Huysmans's subsequent novels, in terms of both formal and thematic innovations.¹⁶ Zola began *Lourdes* as a single novel, but as he completed his notes for it in 1892, he came up with the idea for a sequel, then a trilogy. Like Huysmans, who had begun his sequel to *Là-bas* in 1891, and had continued to present his story through the eyes of a single protagonist, Zola, too, focused primarily upon one character. Both series are set in a contemporary time period, usually two or three years before their composition, and both are *romans à thèse*, where the authors react to real historical events and people in their fiction by using their characters as spokesmen. Both series replace plot with dialogue in order to convey their theories about science and religion.

Just as Huysmans had begun focusing on one character and his point of view in *A Rebours* and *Là-bas*, so Zola traced the thoughts of a single protagonist, Father Pierre Froment. His debt to Huysmans is obvious, since he had suggested, in his interview with Huret, that analyzing a priest's spiritual profile would be a fascinating yet next to impossible task. A priest, Huysmans thought, was "inanalysable": but would certainly provide a new topic for a Naturalist novel.¹⁷ With Pierre Froment, a priest who has lost his faith, Zola attempts to fit the bill: the character is torn between his mother's Catholicism and his dead father's dedication to science. Accordingly, like Durtal, Pierre is tormented by a spiritual crisis. While Durtal is miserable in the modern world and seeks refuge from it by studying the past, by exploring churches and religious communities in order to find a belief that can support his *spleen*, Pierre, too, wanders through the major cities of the Catholic world and their religious communities in an attempt to renew his faith. Even the name Pierre Froment, in its rocky fertility, reflects the values Huysmans placed in the name Durtal—hardness, aridity, and the ability to change.¹⁸

The moral of the two novels is also similar. Huysmans's characters conclude *Là-bas* by

showing that excessive positivism encourages mysticism: “C’est juste au moment où le positivisme bat son plein, que le mysticisme s’éveille et que les folies de l’occulte commencent... Mais il a toujours été ainsi; les queues de siècle se ressemblent. Toutes vacillent et sont troubles. Alors que le matérialisme sévit, la magie se lève” (XII, 2, 151-52). The conclusion of Zola’s *Lourdes*, similarly reflects Huysmans’s link between science and mysticism: “Dans la lassitude de ce siècle finissant, l’humanité, éperdue et meurtrie d’avoir acquis goulûment trop de science, se croit abandonnée des médecins de l’âme et du corps et retourne au mysticisme” (VII, 400). Both writers focus on the problems between science and mysticism, and both call upon literature to look at the two together. After 1891, Zola chose as the new theme of his work the tensions between science and religion that Huysmans had begun tracing. This duel forms the narrative tension of every subsequent Zola novel, from *Le Docteur Pascal* to *Vérité*.

Although Zola continued to admire Huysmans and his work, they were barely on speaking terms after *Là-bas*, and Huysmans virtually disappeared from Zola’s correspondence after his attack upon Naturalism. Zola was apparently exasperated by *Là-bas*, then annoyed by the success of Huysmans’s 1894 *En Route*, in which Durtal converts to Catholicism and spends time in a Trappist monastery, as had Huysmans.¹⁹ This irritability is not surprising considering that from 1892-93, during the research and composition of *Lourdes*, Zola was accused of having forsaken science for religion. Huysmans’s conversion to Catholicism had shaken up the press, which, in turn, caricatured Zola as a convert. Like Huysmans, he was seen as having defected from Naturalism to Catholicism.²⁰

Although Zola was bothered by Huysmans’s success, it is clear that he was also influenced by his formal innovations and his message about modifying Naturalism. Not only did he

paraphrase Huysmans's plans for Naturalism in the Huret interview, but he also transformed the focus of *Le Docteur Pascal*, the first novel composed after *Là-bas*. In April 1890 Zola had planned the novel as an homage to Claude Bernard and the difficulties of balancing domestic life with scientific research,²¹ yet immediately following his second trip to Lourdes, in August 1892, he wanted *Le Docteur Pascal* to end with “une vaste vision de l'avenir...une vision vague et incertaine, mais grandiose” (Speirs 98). In addition, Zola portrayed Pascal Rougon as priest-like scientist (with a highly symbolic Catholic name) whom the narrator calls a “bénédictin, cloître dans ses livres” (R-M V, 1027). Pascal's “*credo*,”²² a confirmation of the power of science, is also revealing in this respect since it consists of a litany of repeated “Je crois,” an incantatory creed mixing positivism with belief. Huysmans had suggested priests as a topic in his Huret interview and both Pascal (the Benedictine of science) and Pierre (the scientific priest) respond to his suggestion. Edmond de Goncourt often raged against Zola for being a plagiarist and a “sacré assimilateur,”²³ who stole other writers' names, ideas, and plots, but was his reaction simply a jealous reaction to Zola's popularity? Or did Zola, at an impasse, decide to borrow from Huysmans?

Zola probably did not consciously model the *Trois villes* series upon Huysmans's Durtal cycle, though it is clear that Huysmans was instrumental in his decision to change.²⁴ Zola's interview with Jules Huret came directly after the bombshell of *Là-bas*, and Huysmans's novel was the last straw in a series of virulent attacks directed against Naturalism. He used Huysmans's criticism—that he should modify Naturalism to include mysticism—as ammunition against his critics. It is not pure coincidence that Zola's decision to do “ce qu'ils veulent” by revamping Naturalism came only a month after Huysmans's *Là-bas*: instead of retiring from the literary world, Zola accepted Huysmans's challenge to renew Naturalism.

The new kind of Naturalism Zola wields against his adversaries is the “religion de la science” that Pierre describes in *Lourdes*. This new religion echoes Pascal Rougon’s “credo,” but also evokes the “classicisme du naturalisme” Zola first proposed to Jules Huret: “... une peinture de la vérité plus large, plus complexe,...une ouverture plus grande sur l’humanité.” Like this new kind of Naturalism, Pierre Froment describes his “religion of science” in terms of truth, humanity, and opening: “...plus près de la vie, faisant à la terre une part plus large, s’accommodant des vérités conquises” (VII, 398). This religion of science provides a new faith for mankind, positive values for a society that he perceives as morally decadent: it extols the values of fecundity, work, truth, and justice, the titles of *Les Quatre Evangiles*.

Zola continued to build upon his concept of a religion of science, notably in a May 18, 1893 speech to the Association Générale des étudiants where he admitted that he was wrong to have focused so much on science in his novels. He urged students not to abandon science, but to give it time, to have faith in its power to succeed:

J’ai, personnellement, regretté déjà d’avoir été un sectaire, en voulant que l’art s’en tînt aux vérités prouvées, les nouveaux venus ont rouvert l’horizon, en reconquéérant l’inconnu, le mystère, et ils ont bien fait. Entre les vérités acquises par la science, qui dès lors sont inébranlables, et les vérités qu’elle arrachera demain à l’inconnu, pour les fixer à leur tour, il y a justement une marge indécise, le terrain du doute et de l’enquête, qui me paraît appartenir autant à la littérature qu’à la science. C’est là que nous pouvons aller en pionniers, faisant notre besogne de précurseurs, interprétant selon notre génie l’action des forces ignorées... (XII, 681)

Zola admits that he was wrong to limit Naturalism to science, so he advises reform: he

encourages pioneering into the indecisive margin of the unknown, both in literature and in science. Like Huysmans's Durtal, who had proposed a Naturalism that would incorporate both science and spirituality, Zola argues that literature and science must treat both the in-between area.

Zola's conception of a religion of science is at the heart of his later works: he devoted nineteen pages of his outline for *Paris*²⁵ to refuting the idea that science was bankrupt or incapable of providing a moral foundation for man. He then placed this passage, a meditation upon science, religion, and their respective merits, into the *Trois Villes* (Aix MS 1608, fol 1-19). His religion of science provides the narrative tension and new faith for all of Zola's later works from the productive belief in technology and progress underlying *Fécondité*, to the worship of communal work and scientific innovation in *Travail* to the triumph of education over Catholicism in *Vérité*.

As if his oeuvre ended with *Docteur Pascal* and the *Rougon-Macquart* series, anthologies routinely fail to mention Zola's last six books, even though they were the best-selling works of his lifetime. Today it is easy to dismiss the *Trois Villes* and the *Quatre Evangiles* as weak or poorly composed books instead of examining them in the context of the ideological crises facing Zola in the fin de siècle. He was not truly a disciple of Huysmans, but he did take his former colleague's criticism to heart. The two new Naturalists crossed paths from 1891-1893, but after 1894 they took very different routes: Huysmans the spiritual and Zola the pragmatic. While Huysmans plunged into Catholicism and became a Benedictine oblate, Zola chose to expose and confront the spiritual and social crises plaguing the fin de siècle.

1. Félicien Champsaur, for example, entitled an October 20, 1879 biographical article for *Le Figaro*, "Un disciple de M. Zola."

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2. Quoted in *Lettres inédites à Emile Zola*, p. 11.
 3. He addressed Zola as “mon cher maître” in his letters from 1877-1878, but loathed being called a “disciple.” An 1884 letter to Bloy reflects this irritation: “Vous êtes un Sous-Veuillot et moi un Sous-Zola. L’étiquette est collée; nous la porterons notre vie durant” (22 June 1884, quoted in Suwala, “Amitié,” 98).
 4. A number of texts confirm these inherent differences, beginning, perhaps with Huysmans’s 1881 worries over *En Ménage*, which he saw as written in a new kind of Naturalism, “...si loin de toutes les idées de Zola...” Zola’s 1881 article on “Céard et Huysmans,” similarly debunks the popular myth about the unity of the five members of the Medan group (XIV, 580), as does an 1887 interview rejected the idea of Zola having “disciples” (Speirs 9). Even more explicitly, in his response to *Là-bas*, Zola congratulates Huysmans for his literary painting, yet remarks the everlasting nature of their differences of opinion: “On semble s’apercevoir aujourd’hui, mon cher Huysmans, que nous ne pensons pas tout à fait de même. Mais cela, n’est-ce pas? a toujours été; et cela ne nous a jamais empêchés de nous aimer dans nos oeuvres” (*Correspondance d’Emile Zola*, vol. 7, 15 May 1891, letter 88: 141). Huysmans had used similar terms in an 1884 letter to Jules Destrée, saying that despite what the press said their discussions were nothing new: “Quant aux scissions criées sur les toits entre Zola et moi, c’est imbécile. Nous nous disputons amicalement souvent entre nous à propos de questions sur lesquelles nous différons du tout au tout, mais nous sommes de vieux amis d’avant l’Assommoir et je le considère comme un grand talent...” (22 Nov. 1884, letter 1: 33-34).
 5. This break had been brewing for a long time, probably from the 1880 “scission” they had about the publication of the Naturalist literary review, *La Comédie Humaine*, which Huysmans was directing. After this argument over money and literary quality Huysmans’s letters became more distant. See letter 75 to Hannon and letters 23-27 to Lemonnier for more about this affair. In 1882, Goncourt noted that the “students” were revolting against the master for the first time (II, 933-34). By 1890, a year before the publication of *Là-bas*, Huysmans told Prins that they he and Zola had little in common: “...il sent mon livre d’en l’air et n’en inaugure [sic] point un grand bienfait pour le naturalisme. La Vérité, c’est que nous n’avons plus rien à nous dire. —Il croit au positivisme, au matérialisme, au moderne, et j’ai de tout cela par dessus la tête. C’est ennuyeux ces relations sur la défensive et que personne ne veut rompre” (19 Feb. 18[90], letter 92: 184). Although he dreaded causing a rift, Huysmans felt he had to speak out against Naturalism. See letters 92-96, and 99, especially letter 95 (7 April 1890) where he talks about “vomiting” Naturalism in its present incarnation (190).
 6. He calls this alternatively “naturalisme spiritualiste” (XII, 11), “naturalisme mystique” (XII, 20), “réalisme surnaturel” (XII, 20), and “supranaturalisme” (XII, 26).
 7. *Là-bas* ran in *L’Echo de Paris* until April 20.
 8. See Jules Huret’s “Avant-propos” (19).
 9. Quoted in *Lettres inédites à Emile Zola*, p. 11 and xiii .
 10. Huysmans, who was interviewed by Huret a month after Zola, picked up on this statement: “Zola ne vous a-t-il pas dit que, s’il en avait le temps, il se mettrait lui-même à chercher l’autre chose?...Eh bien! savez-vous qu’il en est capable!...Il est encore jeune, et s’il veut, d’un coup de ses reins d’athlète, il peut percer le tunnel où il a acculé le naturalisme...Alors, ce sera intéressant: on pourra voir” (167).

11. To Edmond de Goncourt. See *Journal*, volume 3, pp. 402, 491. See also Speirs and Signori, p. 56 (February 14, 1890 interview with *Le Siècle*), p. 61 (April 2, 1890 interview with *Le Figaro*).

12. See P. Martino, for example, who claims, in *Le Naturalisme français* (6th edition, 1960, p. 213): “Tous ces romans sont des romans de passion, d’imagination, de rêve. Zola a fini par y abandonner tout à fait ses procédés d’autrefois.” (quoted in Baguley, *Fécondité*, p. 5). Similarly, Armand Lanoux, during the 1968 “Colloque Zola,” focuses on the weaknesses of these series: “Quel que soit l’intérêt que présente encore cette série [*Les trois villes*], il y a là comme une dilution, comme une dilatation qui vient avec l’âge et la faiblesse de l’écrivain qui vieillit, du romancier qui vieillit, se trouve en quelque sorte doublée par la volonté du prophète qui veut sans cesse élargir son domaine” (Revue spéciale *Europe* 1968, #468-469, p. 158).

13. He borrowed Bourget’s expression, “la banqueroute de la science.” “La Banqueroute du naturalisme,” *La Revue des deux Mondes*, September 1, 1887. He would return to this theme at great length in an 1895 article entitled, “Après une visite au Vatican,” *Revue des deux Mondes*, January 1, 1895.

14. This vacation was planned to distance Madame Zola from Paris while Jeanne was giving birth to Jacques. They were in Lourdes from September 13-17. See *Correspondance générale d’Emile Zola*, VII, 199, note 1.

15. See, for example, Henri Mitterand’s notes for *Le Docteur Pascal* (R-M, V, 1572).

16. Although Huysmans was later accused of having copied Zola in writing *Les Foules de Lourdes* (1906), he purposefully chose to present his journalistic account of the city as a non-fictional complement to Zola’s work, which he had Durtal praise in *La Cathédrale*. For more about these two “Lourdes” see also Thierry Lescuyer’s “Huysmans et Zola: Lourdes en question.”

17. Huysmans probably excluded Serge Mouret and l’abbé Faujas, two of Zola’s striking priest characters, because Zola’s focus in creating these characters was not purely upon their spiritual struggles, but upon their tensions with other elements such as love or social conquest.

18. Huysmans discovered the name in a conversation with a friend, and said, “Dans les langues du Nord, cela signifierait: ‘Vallée de l’aridité’ ou ‘Vallée de la porte’.” Quoted in Baldick, p. 165.

19. “Je ne vois plus Zola que Là-bas a exaspéré. Tout le mouvement littéraire actuel est contre lui; il ne dérage paraît-il pas, et m’accuse toujours d’avoir dès à Rebours, démoli le naturalisme. Eh zut! Qu’il soit de l’académie et nous fiche la paix!” Huysmans explained to Arij Prins in a January 24, 1892 letter (letter 114: 235). A few years later he wrote: “Zola est exaspéré par le bouquin (En Route) —Il est vrai qu’il a reçu pas mal de choses désagréables à propos d’En Route. Il est tombé ici, dans un discrédit littéraire absolu. On ne parle plus de lui que comme d’un négociant —et l’on rit de cet homme qui a banqueté quelques jours à Rome, n’a pas été reçu au Vatican —et déclare qu’il va faire un livre sur cette ville et sur le Pape. Ce sera, en effet, bien documenté” (1 April 1895, letter 139 to Arij Prins: 273).

20. Although he was ridiculed in the press, the *Trois Villes* and *Quatre Evangiles* set new records for Zola’s book sales: their first edition printings ran from 75,000 to 90,000 copies, and were the most published and purchased of the works circulated during his lifetime. The Charpentier-Fasquelle press published 88,000 copies of each of the *Trois villes* in their first printing, and 77,000 copies of each of the first two *Evangiles*. This is at least 10,000 more copies than any

other first printing of Zola's work (Becker, "Zola," 2548).

21. See Speirs, p. 61. He describes Bernard as "un martyr de la vie conjugale" in an April 2, 1890 interview with *Le Figaro*.

22. "Je crois que l'avenir de l'humanité est dans le progrès de la raison par la science. Je crois que la poursuite de la vérité par la science est l'idéal divin que l'homme doit se proposer. Je crois que tout est illusion et vanité, en dehors du trésor des vérités lentement acquises et qui ne se perdront jamais plus" (R-M, V, 953).

23. See the *Journal*, volume 2, November 2, 1883, p. 536. Every few pages of the *Journal* mention Zola's "theft" of *Germinie Lacerteux* (*L'Assomoir*) or of other names, plots, or themes.

24. Huysmans's correspondence does not show that he noticed any improprieties. In fact, he admired *Lourdes* as one of the best books of the fin de siècle.

25. This passage is reprinted in volume 14 of Zola's *Oeuvres complètes*, pp. 838-41.

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