Émile Zola

Doctor Pascal

A new translation by Julie Rose

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DOCTOR PASCAL

ÉMILE ZOLA was born in Paris in 1840, the son of a Venetian engineer and his French wife. He grew up in Aix-en-Provence, where he made friends with Paul Cézanne. After an undistinguished school career and a brief period of dire poverty in Paris, Zola joined the newly founded publishing firm of Hachette, which he left in 1866 to live by his pen. He had already published a novel and his first collection of short stories. Other novels and stories followed, until in 1871 Zola published the first volume of his Rougon-Macquart series, with the subtitle *Histoire naturelle et sociale d'une famille sous le Second Empire*, in which he sets out to illustrate the influence of heredity and environment on a wide range of characters and milieus. However, it was not until 1877 that his novel *L'Assommoir*, a study of alcoholism in the working classes, brought him wealth and fame. The last of the Rougon-Macquart series appeared in 1893 and his subsequent writing was far less successful, although he achieved fame of a different sort in his vigorous and influential intervention in the Dreyfus case. His marriage in 1870 had remained childless, but his extremely happy liaison in later life with Jeanne Rozerot, initially one of his domestic servants, gave him a son and a daughter. He died in 1902.

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ÉMILE ZOLA

Doctor Pascal

Translated by
JULIE ROSE

With an Introduction and Notes by
BRIAN NELSON

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INTRODUCTION

Readers who do not wish to learn details of the plot will prefer to read the Introduction as an Afterword

Émile Zola (1840–1902) occupies a distinctive place in the great tradition of French (and European) critical-realist fiction. His main achievement as a writer was his twenty-volume cycle of novels *Les Rougon-Macquart* (1871–93), in which the fortunes of a family are followed over several decades. The various family members spread throughout all levels of society, and through their lives Zola examines the changing social, sexual, and cultural landscape of the late nineteenth century, creating an epic sense of social transformation. The Rougons represent the hunt for wealth and position, their members rising to commanding positions in the worlds of government and finance; the Macquarts, the illegitimate branch, are the submerged proletariat, with the exception of Lisa Macquart (*The Belly of Paris/Le Ventre de Paris*, 1873); the Mourets, descended from the Macquart line, are the bourgeois tradesmen and provincial bourgeoisie. Zola is the quintessential novelist of modernity, understood as a time of tumultuous change. The motor of change was the rapid growth of capitalism, with all that it entailed in terms of the transformation of the city, new forms of social practice and economic organization, and heightened political pressures. Zola was fascinated by change, and specifically by the emergence of a new mass society.

The power of Zola's vision comes from his commitment to the value of 'truth' in art. This was above all a moral commitment. The novelist's emphasis on speaking the truth was based on his conviction that the writer must play a social role: to represent the sorts of things—industrialization, the growth of the city, the birth of consumer culture, the workings of the financial system, the misdeeds of government, crime, poverty, prostitution—that affect ordinary people in their daily lives. And he wrote about these things ironically and satirically. Naturalist fiction represents a major assault on bourgeois morality and institutions. It takes an unmitigated delight—while also seeing the process as a serious duty—in revealing the vices, follies,

and corruption behind the respectable facade. The last line of *The Belly of Paris* is: 'Respectable people… What bastards!'

The commitment to truth corresponded to a new integrity of representation. Zola opened the novel up to entirely new areas: the realities of working-class life, class relations, sexuality and the body; and his work embodied a new freedom of expression in their depiction. In his sexual themes he ironically subverts the notion that the social supremacy of the bourgeoisie is a natural rather than a cultural phenomenon; the more searchingly he investigated the theme of middle-class adultery, the more he threatened to uncover the fragility and arbitrariness of the whole bourgeois social order. His new vision of the body, entailing a greater explicitness of description, is matched by his new vision of the working class, combining carnivalesque images with serious analysis of its sociopolitical condition. In *L'Assommoir* (1877) he describes the misery of the working-class slums behind the public splendour of the Empire, while in *Germinal* (1885) he shows how the power of mass working-class movements had become a radically new, and frightening, element in human history. The attacks Zola sustained throughout his career for his purported obsession with 'filth' were largely political in nature—attempts by the Establishment to discredit him. He was a reformist, not a revolutionary, and the denunciation of social injustice and hypocrisy embodied in his fiction is implicit, based on an aesthetic of 'objectivity'; but it is no less eloquent for that—Zola never stopped being a danger to the established order. It was entirely appropriate that in 1898 he crowned his literary career with a political act, a frontal attack on state power and its abuse: 'J'accuse…!', his famous open letter to the President of the Republic in defence of Alfred Dreyfus, the Jewish army officer falsely accused of treason.

Doctor Pascal

While *La Débâcle* (1892), the nineteenth novel of *Les Rougon-Macquart*, brought to a close the history of the Second Empire, *Doctor Pascal* (*Le Docteur Pascal*, 1893), the twentieth and final novel of the series, concludes the saga of the Rougon-Macquart family. Set in Plassans, the novel begins in 1872, after the fall of the Empire. Pascal Rougon, a doctor, first appears in *The Fortune of the Rougons* (1871) as the second son of Pierre and Félicité Rougon; his elder brother is Eugène

Rougon, his younger brother is Aristide (Saccard). He stands apart, to such an extent that he 'did not seem to belong to the family' (*The Fortune of the Rougons*, chapter 2). When he reappears twenty-two years later as the central figure of the novel that bears his name, it is as a heroic, almost messianic, old man, a kind of scientist-scholar, prophesying a glorious future. Devoted to medical research, he has spent his life studying genetics, chronicling and classifying the hereditary ills of his own family—the thirty descendants of his grandmother Adélaïde Fouque (Tante Dide). He keeps his files locked in a cupboard, along with a Family Tree he has painstakingly compiled. Additionally, he has developed a process of hypodermic injections which, he believes, will cure hereditary and nervous diseases. Pascal's young niece, Clotilde (daughter of Aristide), who lives with him, has acquired strong religious convictions under the influence of Martine, the doctor's pious old servant. Clotilde considers her uncle's work a vain, even sacrilegious, attempt to understand what can be known only by God, and begs him to destroy his manuscripts. The conflict between science and religious faith is the focus of the first half of the novel. Pascal responds to Clotilde's pleas:

> I believe that the future of humanity lies in the progress of reason through science. I believe that the pursuit of truth through science is the divine ideal that man ought to set himself. I believe that all is illusion and vanity outside the treasure trove of truths slowly acquired and which will never again be lost. I believe that the sum of these truths, which are always growing in number, will end up giving man incalculable power—and serenity, if not happiness… Yes, I believe in the ultimate triumph of life. (p. 39)

Pascal shows his niece the genealogical tree, and, one by one, reads out his files and comments on them, rehearsing in a single sitting the narratives Zola took twenty years to produce: 'Ah! . . . There's a world, a society, a whole civilization in there, the whole of life is there, in all its manifestations, good and bad, hammered out in the forge fire that sweeps all along' (p. 97). Clotilde is won over, persuaded of the power of medical science and natural evolution.

Eventually, the doctor and his pupil begin an intimate and tender relationship, albeit incestuous. Pascal's mother, Félicité, is outraged that they live together out of wedlock. A financial crisis and burgeoning debts induce Pascal to send Clotilde away to Paris. He falls ill and dies before she can return. Félicité, desperate to keep the family

skeletons hidden at any cost, burns her son's research papers. Clotilde, on her return, finds fragments of his work, as well as the Family Tree, and resolves to complete the project. Her and Pascal's child is born several months later, and the novel closes in semi-idyllic fashion—Nicholas White speaks of the 'euphoria' of the final pages[1]—by focusing on the hope for the future, and for the regeneration of the family, which is symbolized by the child.

The themes of *Doctor Pascal*, in particular its optimistic vision and the conflict it dramatizes between scientific materialism and religious faith, are best understood by placing the novel in the context not simply of Zola's original intentions for his novel series but also of the climate of ideas in France in the mid- and late nineteenth century.

Science and Literature

During the third quarter of the nineteenth century, France enjoyed a period of spectacular economic growth. Industrialization accelerated, while scientific discoveries were constantly converted into inventions and processes that began to transform everyday life. The transforming power of science seemed infinite. The cult of science underlay most nineteenth-century social theories, and predicated a universe governed by laws which, when grasped, would reveal the 'truth' about the nature of man and his place in the world. In philosophy the scientific method bred positivism, expounded by Auguste Comte (1798–1857) in his six-volume *Cours de philosophie positive* (1830–42). Comte believed that 'truth' was arrived at, not through metaphysical ideas derived from man's consciousness, but through the systematic analysis of observable phenomena; we can only know what we can observe. Positivism was thus virtually anti-religious, arguing that man must shed any belief in absolute supreme causes. It was deterministic in its application of science to society; society and the universe were connected, Comte held, through the inexorable workings of changeless natural laws. And it was optimistic in its view of what scientific method could achieve: Comte believed in 'social engineering', arguing that by applying scientific method to the study of man as a social animal, and thereby deducing the laws that govern

[1] Nicholas White, 'Family Histories and Family Plots', in Brian Nelson (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Zola* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 19–38 (at 37).

the functioning of society, it would be possible to design appropriate policies to redress social ills.

Advances in all branches of the sciences seemed to confirm the potential of science to reveal the seamlessness of some overarching structure of connections. The search for a unitary pattern, a master key to an understanding of all social processes, was characteristic of much mid-nineteenth-century thought. Karl Marx offered his contemporaries the explanatory system of the class struggle as the key to human history. Charles Darwin (1809–82) became closely associated with Marx, for Marx's concept of the class struggle as the motor of human history was paralleled by Darwin's concept of the struggle for survival as the essential dynamic of human evolution. Darwin's ideas were popularized in France by the materialist philosopher and literary historian Hippolyte Taine (1828–93), who took the determinist view that major influences, which he termed 'race' (heredity), 'milieu' (environment), and 'moment' (historical context), were responsible for moulding the individual. Thus, in the middle decades of the nineteenth century, science not only acquired enormous intellectual prestige as the principal, or even the sole, model for the creation of true knowledge, but also became the basis of a kind of secular religion.

It was in this positivistic intellectual atmosphere that the young Zola found himself when he arrived in Paris from his native Provence in 1858. In 1862 he was taken on at the rapidly expanding publishing house of Hachette, where he became the head of the new publicity department. Working in this department provided him with a platform to develop a literary career, for it enabled him to learn about the publishing world and to meet many leading authors. These included Hippolyte Taine, the literary critic Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve (1804–69), and Émile Littré (1801–81), a medical practitioner who was the leading propagandist of positivism during the Second Empire (1852–70). Converted from a youthful romantic idealism to realism in art and literature, Zola began promoting a 'scientific' view of literature. He was influenced by the realist novelist Honoré de Balzac (1799–1850); by the views on heredity and environment of Taine; by Prosper Lucas (1808–85), a medical theorist, author of an important treatise on natural heredity; and by the evolutionary theories of Darwin. Zola himself claimed to have based his writing methods largely on the physiologist Claude Bernard's *Introduction to the Study of Experimental Medicine* (*Introduction à l'étude de la médecine expérimentale*), which he

had read soon after its appearance in 1865. In his essay *The Experimental Novel* (*Le Roman expérimental*, 1880), he argued that the 'truth' for which he aimed could only be attained through meticulous documentation and research. The work of the novelist, he wrote, represented a form of practical sociology, complementing the work of the scientist; their common purpose was to improve the world by promoting greater understanding of the laws that determine the material conditions of life. Clearly, literature cannot be equated with the laboratory in any properly scientific sense; however, as Linda Nochlin has written, in terms that are particularly pertinent to Zola: 'In making truth the aim of art—truth to the facts, to perceived and experienced reality—[the Realists'] outlook evinced the same forces that shaped the scientific attitude itself.'[2]

At the end of 1867, Zola published *Thérèse Raquin*, a melodramatic tale of adultery and murder. The critic Louis Ulbach denounced the novel as 'putrid literature'. Zola defended himself in a preface to the second edition (1868), in which he outlined his aim to produce a new, 'scientific' form of realism, which he called 'naturalism'. His purpose, he said, was to use a strictly experimental methodology to analyse the processes by which his characters (whom he calls 'temperaments') are completely dominated by their nerves and blood, are devoid of free will, and are drawn into every act of their lives by the inexorable laws of their physical nature. The epigraph to the novel was Taine's proclamation that 'vice and virtue are products like vitriol and sugar'. The novel was not only a great popular success, but also marked a crucial step in Zola's literary development. After its publication, he sent a plan to his publisher Albert Lacroix for a series of novels—which was to become *Les Rougon-Macquart*. Zola aimed to represent five 'worlds' (bourgeoisie, lower classes, commercial class, upper classes, and the marginal world of prostitutes, criminals, artists, and priests). His ambition, he said, was to emulate Balzac by producing an all-inclusive, multi-volume panorama of the contemporary world. Conceived initially as a sequence of ten novels, the project grew to twenty novels. The subtitle of the cycle, 'A Natural and Social History of a Family in the Second Empire', suggests Zola's interconnected aims: to use fiction as a vehicle for a great social chronicle; to use the symbolic possibilities of a family with tainted blood to

[2] Linda Nochlin, *Realism* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), 41.

represent a diseased society—the corrupt yet dynamic France of Louis Napoleon's Second Empire; and to demonstrate, in a way that would emulate contemporary scientific discourse, the determining influence on human behaviour of environment and heredity.

The Revolt Against Positivism

In late nineteenth-century France, two now-familiar Parisian monuments appeared, both with strong symbolic significance: the Eiffel Tower, erected in 1889 to celebrate the hundredth anniversary of the French Revolution and to coincide with the Universal Exhibition held that year to glorify science and material progress; and the Sacré-Cœur basilica on the summit of the Butte Montmartre, built between 1875 and 1914 as an expression of a will to spiritual renewal and, expressly, to expiate the sins of the city following its three-month takeover by the Commune of 1871, when the workers had persecuted priests and shot the Archbishop.

Much of the significant creative and discursive writing of the *fin de siècle* reflects the ideological strains of the period and, more narrowly, a powerful current of idealism: a sustained reaction against positivism and its claim that human reason could, through 'scientific method', come to know and understand everything. It became fashionable to speak of the 'bankruptcy' of science. Owen Chadwick writes:

> In the 1880s passed over Western Europe one of those movements of mind that history perceives but cannot easily analyse or define. It was something to do with a reviving sense that the world holds mystery and that the prosaic explanations of the age after the romantics will not satisfy.[3]

The first collective manifestation of anti-positivist culture was the Decadent movement, which burst onto the French scene in 1884 with the publication of *Against Nature* (*A rebours*) by Joris-Karl Huysmans (1848–1907), and which was to become the dominant aesthetic of the *fin de siècle.* Huysmans began as a disciple of Zola, writing naturalist fiction (*Marthe*, 1876; *Married Life / En ménage*, 1881). *Against Nature* marked a deliberate break with naturalism and its materialist vision. The novel's anti-hero, a neurotic aristocrat named Des Esseintes,

[3] Owen Chadwick, *The Secularization of the European Mind in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 239.

seeks to escape from the crass materialism of modern society by turning his back on it and withdrawing into a world of his own making. He dedicates himself to realizing his own private fantasies and pleasures, attempting to create for himself an artificial paradise by living life 'à rebours' ('back to front' or 'against nature'), thus carrying to the point of psychopathology the vision of his master, Charles Baudelaire (1821–67), who initiated the Decadent obsession with the artificial and the perverse, arguing that the aim of literature and art was not to imitate nature but to negate it.

The reader of *Against Nature* learns that the favourite writer of Des Esseintes is the enigmatic poet Stéphane Mallarmé (1842–98), the leader of the Symbolist movement. Just as Des Esseintes flees modern life by withdrawing into a world of his own making, the poetry (in both verse and prose) of Mallarmé is based on an aesthetic ideal of self-containment. Central to Mallarmé's poetic principles is his vision of a 'pure' work of art independent of the world outside it—either the life of the author or the society in which the author lives. He sought to develop a poetics that emphasized the patterns created within the self-enclosed structure of a poem, by the words composing it, rather than the referential function, however symbolic, of those words. He was famed for his salons, weekly gatherings of writers and intellectuals at his apartment in the Rue de Rome for discussions of poetry, art, and philosophy.

Zola's naturalism began to be explicitly rejected by erstwhile admirers. In 1886 Count Eugène-Melchior de Vogüé published a study of the Russian novel, in which he made a famous plea for a novel free from the shackles of naturalism, a novel which would deal with matters of the spirit as well as the flesh. With the publication of *Earth* in 1887 Zola's dark vision of a peasant world existing beyond all civilized values, and the prominence in his text of explicit sex and bodily functions, brought to the fore once again the controversy that had always informed critical responses to naturalism. *Earth* was greeted with moral outrage. The most widely read expression of this outrage was the so-called 'Manifesto of the Five'. Published on 18 August 1887 in *Le Figaro*, the day Zola finished his novel but while it was still appearing in serial form, this 'Manifesto' (probably instigated, for reasons of jealousy, by Zola's fellow novelists Edmond de Goncourt and Alphonse Daudet) was a vicious attack on the novel and on Zola personally. It was signed by five young authors claiming to represent

the younger generation of writers: Paul Bonnetain, J.-H. Rosny, Lucien Descaves, Paul Margueritte, and Gustave Guiches. Zola's 'violent penchant for obscenity', they wrote, was a symptom of his 'insatiable appetite for sales' and of his own psychological and physical dysfunction ('the illness of his loins'). In sum, *Earth* was nothing but 'a collection of scatological stories' in which the Master had sunk to the lowest depths of vulgarity. In similar vein, the well-known novelist Anatole France denounced the novel in *Le Temps* as 'the Georgics of Filth', while the influential Establishment critic Ferdinand Brunetière, writing in the *Revue des deux mondes*, took advantage of the manifesto to proclaim the naturalist movement bankrupt.

During the same decade, there was a remarkable revival of Catholic literature and a spate of conversions to Catholicism among the literary élite. Notable examples of these conversions were Huysmans, Léon Bloy (1846–1917), Paul Bourget (1852–1935), and Paul Claudel (1868–1955). As Richard Griffiths has written:

> In the 1880's a Catholic Revival, though it would not have appeared so to the average man of the time, was only to be expected. Two centuries of unbelief (or, at best, deism) in intellectual circles, culminating in the positivist excesses of the Second Empire, could not but produce, eventually, a strong reaction; and that this reaction should take place primarily in the world of literature, where imagination and sensibility have so great a part to play, is not surprising.[4]

In his novel *The Disciple* (*Le Disciple*, 1889) Bourget, a former disciple of Taine, proclaimed the emptiness of positivist doctrines and the dangers of a life unsupported by absolute moral values. Positivism was further undermined by the writings of the philosopher Henri Bergson (1859–1941), who, in his *Time and Free Will* (*Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience*, 1889) and his extremely popular public lectures at the Collège de France, stressed the existence within people of intuitive forces totally at odds with the mechanistic view of human behaviour embodied in positivism.

During this period there was, also, a growing mood of pessimism concerning the well-being of the nation. The psychological impact of France's calamitous military defeat at the hands of the Prussians in 1870, and the trauma of the Commune of 1871, when the workers of

[4] Richard Griffiths, *The Reactionary Revolution: The Catholic Revival in French Literature, 1870–1914* (London: Constable, 1966), 8.

Paris seized control of the city and declared its independence from the rest of France, should not be underestimated; nor indeed should the fears caused by the nation's declining birth rate ('depopulation'). Moral critics blamed the military disaster on demographic decline and moral degeneracy, while writers like the social psychologist Gustave Le Bon (1841–1931) began to develop theories of racial-historical decline, displacing the notion of degeneration from individual degenerates (cretins, criminals, the insane) to society (crowds, masses, cities). Le Bon saw in the crowd the unleashing of man's primitive instincts, a social regression, a symptom of moral and evolutionary decline. In a sense, degeneration theory is the dark side of Darwinian evolutionary theories of progress. Evolution, it was claimed, proceeds unevenly, and at any moment there are forces that pull us back down the evolutionary ladder.[5]

Pascal–Zola

Doctor Pascal embodies a defence by Zola of his naturalist project in the context of the shifting values of the *fin de siècle*, expressing his desire to participate polemically in the ideological struggles of his time. It also embodies a reflection by Zola on his activity as a writer. And it is a highly personal novel in a further sense, for it transposes intimate aspects of Zola's own life. Pascal may thus be seen as Zola's double in philosophical, writerly, and autobiographical terms.

'One could argue', writes Charles Bernheimer, 'about [the entire Rougon-Macquart series] that, if its method is naturalist, its subject is decadence, the corruption and degeneration of France under Louis Napoleon.'[6] Everything leads to the collapse of the Second Empire with the Franco-Prussian War, as described in *La Débâcle.* Moreover, Zola's vision in *Les Rougon-Macquart* is marked by the anxiety that accompanied modernization and rapid social change. The demons of modernity are figured in images of apocalyptic destruction or loss of control: the collapsing pithead in *Germinal*, the stock market crash in

[5] For a particularly illuminating discussion of contemporary discourses of decadence, see Daniel Pick, *Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder, c.1848–c.1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

[6] Charles Bernheimer, 'Decadent Naturalism/Naturalist Decadence', in *Decadent Subjects: The Idea of Decadence in Art, Literature, Philosophy, and Culture of the* Fin de Siècle *in Europe*, ed. T. Jefferson Kline and Naomi Schor (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 59.

Money, the runaway locomotive in *La Bête humaine.* The railway in *La Bête humaine*, in bringing people together yet keeping them apart, symbolizes the disconnection inherent in modern society, of which the novel's psychopathic protagonist, Jacques Lantier, is an extreme, morbid example. In *Doctor Pascal*, Zola is intent, above all, on responding to those who saw in *Les Rougon-Macquart*, with its chronicles of greed, corruption, and murder, nothing but morbidity and darkness. He wanted to articulate the essential optimism of his work. It should be noted that during the 1880s his novels reveal the increasing prominence of mythic discourse in the representation of social reality. Just as he situates man within a total context of shaping influences, so he tends more and more to relate the personal and social action of his novels to a synthesizing world view. This view is essentially that of Darwinian evolution. Zola's conception of society is shaped by a biological model informed by the struggle between the life instinct and the death instinct: the forces of creation and destruction, degeneration and renewal. A myth of catastrophe is opposed by a myth of hope. This pattern of Eternal Return (visible throughout Zola's work, from the cemetery bursting with fecundity in *The Fortune of the Rougons* to the climactic images of germination in *Germinal* and *Earth*) had been given special emphasis in the eighteenth and nineteenth novels of the Rougon-Macquart series: *Money* (*L'Argent*, 1891) and *La Débâcle*. Zola wanted to make it understood that *Doctor Pascal* was written, as he noted in his preliminary notes for the novel, 'out of a love for life, out of admiration for its vital forces'.

Zola makes Pascal his double not only by expressing through him what he called, in his planning notes, 'the whole philosophical meaning' of *Les Rougon-Macquart* (that is, his optimism), but also by turning Pascal into an image (and symbolic affirmation) of himself as novelist. Pascal, the fictional character, is a surrogate of Zola, the naturalist writer. The idea of Pascal as an author, rather than a simple participant—one more pathological 'case'—in the narrative of the Rougon-Macquart family, is reinforced by the fact, as he explains to Clotilde, that he is free of the family's inherited characteristics by virtue of his 'innateness' (the term used in biology to describe the process whereby some individuals are totally unaffected by the hereditary transmission of genetic characteristics). Thus he is known by the people of Plassans as 'Doctor Pascal', not as 'Pascal Rougon'; he is able to stand outside the world of his family, like an author in relation

to the world of his characters. The effect of the metafictional dimension of *Doctor Pascal*—Pascal's outlining of the various narratives that make up the preceding nineteen novels of the Rougon-Macquart series, and his provision of supplementary details concerning the various family members—is to create in the reader an awareness that *Doctor Pascal*, and Zola's work generally, is not merely a defence of scientific materialism (and a defence, in those terms, of the naturalist project), nor simply a summarizing conclusion to *Les Rougon-Macquart*, but a *narrative* construction, an *imaginative* work—'in short, it opens up a reflection on the process of story-making and story-telling'.[7]

The Pascal–Zola equation also has a deeply personal dimension, to which the myth of regenerative optimism is central. Only *The Bright Side of Life* (*La Joie de vivre*, 1884) can be compared with *Doctor Pascal* as autobiographical projection. By the time Zola wrote *Doctor Pascal*, he had taken a mistress, Jeanne Rozerot, who had borne him two children, Denise in September 1889 and Jacques in September 1891. (The Zolas were childless, but in 1859, five years before she met Zola, his future wife Alexandrine had given birth to an illegitimate daughter, whom she had given up to the Hôpital des Enfants-Trouvés (Foundling Hospital). Eleven days later, the baby died.) The official, printed dedication of *Doctor Pascal* reads:

> To the memory of MY MOTHER and to MY DEAR WIFE I dedicate this novel which is the summary and conclusion of my entire *œuvre*.

On 23 June 1893 Zola gave a copy of the novel to Jeanne, and on the cover he had written:

> To my beloved Jeanne, to my Clotilde, who has given me the royal feast of her youth and taken thirty years off my life by giving me the gift of my Denise and my Jacques, the two dear children for whom I wrote this book, so that they might know, when they read it, how much I loved their mother and how tenderly they should repay her for the happiness with which she consoled me in my great sorrows.[8]

In May 1888, Zola's wife Alexandrine had hired Jeanne as her *lingère* (embroideress and chambermaid). In late August, the Zolas went on holiday to Royan, accompanied by Jeanne. On their return to

[7] Susan Harrow, *Zola, The Body Modern: Pressures and Prospects of Representation* (Oxford: Legenda, 2010), 140.

[8] Quoted by Henri Mitterand in *Les Rougon-Macquart* (Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1960–7), v, 1573.

Paris, Jeanne suddenly resigned her post. Zola installed her in an apartment in the Rue Saint-Lazare, not far from the Zolas' home in the Rue de Bruxelles. Zola and Jeanne became lovers in December. She was 21, he was 48. It was in the Rue Saint-Lazare that Denise and Jacques were born. Then, in November 1891, Alexandrine received an anonymous letter, telling her of the affair and the children, and giving her Jeanne's address. She was enraged. Zola, fearing 'a calamity', sent a telegram to his friend Henry Céard saying 'My wife is going completely mad' and asking him to tell Jeanne to vacate her apartment. When Alexandrine gained access to Jeanne's home, she vented her anger on the furniture, broke open a writing desk, and seized all of Zola's letters.[9] It is not difficult to see in Félicité's seizure of Pascal's manuscripts a reflection of the actions of Zola's wife.

She was deeply hurt. She felt betrayed. And she was distressed at the thought that close friends were privy to her husband's liaison, and that much gossip had circulated.[10] Slowly the crisis subsided, though deep tensions remained. A modus vivendi was developed, whereby Zola was able to share himself between two homes until the end of his days. Jeanne, Denise, and Jacques continued to live near the Zolas both in Paris and at Médan (they would spend the summer at a house first in the village of Cheverchemont, on the other side of the Seine, and then in Verneuil, which Zola could reach on his bicycle). Zola spent his nights and mornings with Alexandrine, but most afternoons would go to see Jeanne and the children. There were complications and constraints, but the arrangement—the double life—'worked'. Eventually, Alexandrine wanted to get to know the children, and once or twice a month, with Zola, took them out to the Tuileries, the Palais-Royal, the Champs-Élysées, or the Bois de Boulogne. After Zola's death in 1902 good relations were established between Alexandrine

[9] It was not until 2004 that the majority of Zola's letters to Jeanne were published: see Émile Zola, *Lettres à Jeanne Rozerot (1892–1902)*, ed. Brigitte Émile-Zola and Alain Pagès (Paris: Gallimard, 2004). Jeanne's letters to Zola were lost, perhaps destroyed by Alexandrine. For a well-informed (but inevitably fragmented) mini-biography of Jeanne, see Alain Pagès, 'The Story of Jeanne', *Bulletin of the Émile Zola Society*, 31–2 (2005), 3–15.

[10] The flavour of some of this gossip is reflected in the *Journal* of Edmond de Goncourt: '[Paul Alexis] confirms my suspicion that Zola now has a closet family (*petit ménage*). He confessed to him that his wife, though an excellent housekeeper, has many "refrigerating" characteristics, which has driven him in search of some "warmth" elsewhere. And he talks about how this elderly man of letters is feeling rejuvenated.' Edmond de Goncourt, *Journal: Mémoires de la vie littéraire* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1989), iii, 350 (entry dated 21 November 1889).

and Jeanne. In 1906 Alexandrine began proceedings with the Conseil d'État to entitle Denise and Jacques to bear the name 'Émile-Zola'. Authorization was granted in May 1907.

Powerful currents of feeling flow through the portrayal in *Doctor Pascal* of the relationship between Pascal–Zola and Clotilde–Jeanne: pure happiness, 'the happiness with which she consoled me in my great sorrows' (as Alain Pagès notes, 'Zola was, in essence, an *unhappy* man'[11]); deep mutual affection; a feeling of rejuvenation (again, a biographical note: having adopted a strict diet, Zola was physically transformed in the late 1880s, losing fourteen kilos in six months); the joy of erotic gratification, described lyrically and at length; the expression of 'forbidden love' in the casting of the lovers as uncle and niece; but also a fear of ageing, a melancholic sense of the irremediable distance in age, and a growing awareness, as in *The Bright Side of Life* but in a different register, of death's shadow—a personal dimension that gives great poignancy to Pascal's statement of belief in 'the ultimate triumph of life'. Pascal dies on the very day after he receives word from Clotilde that she is pregnant; and the novel's conclusion celebrates a new life, Clotilde happily nursing their newborn son. Pascal's child is seen as a guarantee of continuity and renewal:

> The child had come, perhaps the redeemer . . . [S]he, his mother, was already dreaming of the future. What would he be, when she had made him big and strong, by giving herself entirely? A scholar who would teach the world a bit of the eternal truth? A captain who would bring his country glory? Or, better still, one of those shepherds of men who quell passions and establish the reign of justice? (p. 294)

[11] Pagès, 'The Story of Jeanne', 10.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

Warning: the note below refers to details of the plot

THIS is the first major English translation of *Le Docteur Pascal* in seventy-three years—since the version done with brio by Vladimir Kean was published in the UK by Elek Books in 1957. Kean's was the third to appear. The first was by Zola's friend Ernest A. Vizetelly (1853–1922), published in the UK by Chatto & Windus in 1893, the same year the original appeared in France (with Charpentier). The second, published in the US by The Macmillan Company five years later in 1898, was done by a woman, Mary J. Serrano.

It's useful, though not essential (the point of a new translation being to be new), to look at earlier translations when they exist. Kean's has regrettably become a rare book. Vizetelly's of 1893 is just as rare these days, despite being reissued twice. Yet, for all the overwrought, florid ornateness of his language, Vizetelly's solutions are always illuminating, often deft. It's quite a leap from his generous extravagance to Serrano's spareness, but her version would inevitably have been done as a corrective. Though elegant, it is not always accurate, nor is it totally unabridged.

Both Serrano and Vizetelly cut sexual material from the text. Interestingly, Serrano does the first sex scene, with gusto, but shaves the second (there are only two, as such), and eliminates altogether Clotilde's letter announcing she is pregnant. Vizetelly cuts both scenes and excises and softens sexual references, but allows Clotilde to be (somewhat miraculously) pregnant by leaving the French word untranslated: *'Enceinte!'* Yet even Kean, cutting nothing and writing with such uninhibited modernity, can be censorious, as when he describes the doctor's 'sordid escapades with the first loose woman he met' in Marseilles, adding the adjectives 'sordid' and 'loose' and thereby providing a judgement Zola carefully refrains from making.

Translations, too, are of their time—and place. Vizetelly was working under legal constraint. From 1884 to 1903 Henry (1820–94) and his son Ernest, between them, published or translated almost every one of Zola's novels in the face of British parliamentary condemnation. Zola's novels were considered a grave threat to public morality, and

Henry Vizetelly was imprisoned for three months for obscenity for publication of Ernest's translation of *La Terre* as *The Soil* in 1888. In a display of shameless hypocrisy, *The Soil* was withdrawn from sale and others of the Vizetelly Zola translations were banned, but Zola's novels were allowed to continue circulating in the original, presumably for the benefit of the French-reading upper classes. Vizetelly was muzzled, though all excisions in *Doctor Pascal* were done with Zola's approval.

Zola said that this novel, which sums up and explains, via Pascal as mouthpiece, 'the characters that have passed through' the previous nineteen in the cycle, would 'refute' the charge he was a pornographer. He also wanted it to counter the charge of 'a lack of tender-heartedness', and said that Pascal would show 'that this is not so'. Readers might agree that this is the most tender-hearted, and intimate, and distressing, of the whole cycle. There are moments so harrowing and violent, I found them emotionally hard to do, just like Vizetelly, almost 130 years ago.

The overall challenge has been to get the register right, finding the right rhythm and consistency of tone. This is a complex work that shifts registers, not only from one chapter or scene to the next, but sometimes within a scene—as when Clotilde, in the hallucinatory banquet scene that is an emotional and erotic apotheosis, suddenly soars off into a pastiche of the Song of Songs, earnestly joined by Pascal. There are the scientific and medical disquisitions, where anachronisms need to be avoided; specialized terminologies of various kinds that need to be refreshed, while remaining historically accurate. There is the strenuously religious cast given to mission statements and creeds, the whole thundering sermon on heredity that pulses through the narrative, along with the aesthetically potent biblical fables and imagery.

There was the usual challenge of conveying Zola's stylistic eccentricities into readable English, unravelling the strings of clauses, flung together breathlessly with no, or few, conjunctions, while not straying too far from them; and there was the unusual challenge of orchestrating the incantatory, at times fetishistic, repetition of words and phrases, whole sentences, throughout the text, sometimes verbatim, sometimes, dizzyingly, with subtle rearrangements and changes.

So much in the book is vividly timeless: the powerful descriptions of nature, the weather, setting the mood and closely syncopated to the

action; all the pungent verbs and fabulous muscular poetry of Zola's prose, with its indelible imagery rendering events. (The great prose poem of the family files, recited to Clotilde on 'the night of the storm', is written by Zola as one enormous continuous paragraph which I have broken up in order to make this important family history more comprehensible without, I hope, disturbing the momentum.)

And there are the things that are of their day. Usually, there is a taut and fertile tension between the two: the timeless and the epochal. Translating Clotilde is key here. She might once have been his life-size experiment in correcting heredity; she comes into her own as a complex being—one in whom Pascal's utopian fantasia of the forward march of humanity lives on in a sense of the rebirth of the Messiah every birth anticipates, but also the subject of her own beliefs and hopes, with the realist and the fantasist and mystic harmoniously combined. She is also, through most of the novel, a charge under Pascal's tutelage, expected to obey him and follow his wishes; and yet, she is an equal, his other mind, his other self, the artist and visionary who completes the man of science. The abiding opposition between science and religion is first expressed as a—friendly—contest between science and art. And Clotilde's ultimate embodiment of believing as an intransitive verb feels very modern, in fact contemporary, to me.

And so, I handled the use of various twinned terms, like submission, submissive; coquetry, coquettish; obedience, obedient, with greater subtlety than a literal translation would have offered. 'Dutiful', 'biddable', 'amenable', all perfectly correct synonyms for 'submissive', for instance, don't adhere to the stylistic repetition in the original, but benefit the rhythm of the English sentences in which they occur and suggest the ways in which submission manifests itself. When I do use the words 'submissive' or 'submission', they have greater weight. I've interpreted similar terms with equal flexibility, depending on mood and rhythm.

One other socially charged term of the kind needs to be explained. I initially used 'Master' as Clotilde's chosen term of address for her uncle, but finally opted to keep the French term 'Maître', as I do 'Monsieur' and 'Mademoiselle', for example. *Maître* and the feminine *maîtresse* are still used in France today to designate a teacher or mentor. Pascal is both, for Clotilde (as distinct from the servant, Martine, for whom he is a loved employer). Clotilde is his disciple—

not a *consœur*, that professional role is not available to her as a young woman of her time—but a disciple and indispensable assistant, who herself asserts her agency and status by preferring the term 'Maître', 'so affectionate, so tenderly reverential', we are told in the very first chapter, to Uncle or Godfather, 'which she found crass'. There are various forms of mastery and being mastered.

I'd like to thank Brian Nelson and Judith Luna for their impeccable editorial suggestions and advice. They have both contributed generously to this translation. Judith has been the guiding spirit of the Zola retranslation programme for Oxford World's Classics since 1998, and put a great deal of time and energy, even after retirement, into coaxing this Zola into better shape. Her insights and 'inside knowledge' have been invaluable. I'm also grateful to Rowena Anketell for her very fine and decisive work on the copy-editing.

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A CHRONOLOGY OF ÉMILE ZOLA

1840 (2 April) Born in Paris, the only child of Francesco Zola (b. 1795), an Italian engineer, and Émilie, née Aubert (b. 1819), the daughter of a glazier. The naturalist novelist was later proud that 'zolla' in Italian means 'clod of earth'

1843 Family moves to Aix-en-Provence

1847 (27 March) Death of father from pneumonia following a chill caught while supervising work on his scheme to supply Aix-en-Provence with drinking water

1852–8 Boarder at the Collège Bourbon at Aix. Friendship with Baptistin Baille and Paul Cézanne. Zola, not Cézanne, wins the school prize for drawing

1858 (February) Leaves Aix to settle in Paris with his mother (who had preceded him in December). Offered a place and bursary at the Lycée Saint-Louis. (November) Falls ill with 'brain fever' (typhoid) and convalescence is slow

1859 Fails his *baccalauréat* twice

1860 (Spring) Is found employment as a copy-clerk but abandons it after two months, preferring to eke out an existence as an impecunious writer in the Latin Quarter of Paris

1861 Cézanne follows Zola to Paris, where he meets Camille Pissarro, fails the entrance examination to the École des Beaux-Arts, and returns to Aix in September

1862 (February) Taken on by Hachette, the well-known publishing house, at first in the dispatch office and subsequently as head of the publicity department. (31 October) Naturalized as a French citizen. Cézanne returns to Paris and stays with Zola

1863 (31 January) First literary article published. (1 May) Manet's *Déjeuner sur l'herbe* exhibited at the Salon des Refusés, which Zola visits with Cézanne

1864 (October) *Tales for Ninon*

1865 *Claude's Confession*. A *succès de scandale* thanks to its bedroom scenes. Meets future wife Alexandrine-Gabrielle Meley (b. 1839), the illegitimate daughter of teenage parents who soon separated; Alexandrine's mother died in September 1849

1866 Resigns his position at Hachette (salary: 200 francs a month) and becomes a literary critic on the recently launched daily *L'Événement* (salary: 500 francs a month). Self-styled 'humble disciple' of Hippolyte Taine. Writes a series of provocative articles condemning the official Salon Selection Committee, expressing reservations about Courbet, and praising Manet and Monet. Begins to frequent the Café Guerbois in the Batignolles quarter of Paris, the meeting-place of the future Impressionists. Antoine Guillemet takes Zola to meet Manet. Summer months spent with Cézanne at Bennecourt on the Seine. (15 November) *L'Événement* suppressed by the authorities

1867 (November) *Thérèse Raquin*

1868 (April) Preface to second edition of *Thérèse Raquin*. (May) Manet's portrait of Zola exhibited at the Salon. (December) *Madeleine Férat*. Begins to plan for the Rougon-Macquart series of novels

1868–70 Working as journalist for a number of different newspapers

1870 (31 May) Marries Alexandrine in a registry office. (September) Moves temporarily to Marseilles because of the Franco-Prussian War

1871 Political reporter for *La Cloche* (in Paris) and *Le Sémaphore de Marseille*. (March) Returns to Paris. (October) Publishes *The Fortune of the Rougons*, the first of the twenty novels making up the Rougon-Macquart series

1872 *The Kill*

1873 (April) *The Belly of Paris*

1874 (May) *The Conquest of Plassans*. First independent Impressionist exhibition. (November) *Further Tales for Ninon*

1875 Begins to contribute articles to the Russian newspaper *Vestnik Evropy* (*European Herald*). (April) *The Sin of Abbé Mouret*

1876 (February) *His Excellency Eugène Rougon*. Second Impressionist exhibition

1877 (February) *L'Assommoir*

1878 Buys a house at Médan on the Seine, 40 kilometres west of Paris. (June) *A Love Story* (*Une page d'amour*)

1880 (March) *Nana*. (May) *Les Soirées de Médan* (an anthology of short stories by Zola and some of his naturalist 'disciples', including Maupassant). (8 May) Death of Flaubert. (September) First of a series of articles for *Le Figaro*. (17 October) Death of his mother. (December) *The Experimental Novel*

1882 (April) *Pot Luck* (*Pot-Bouille*). (3 September) Death of Turgenev

1883 (13 February) Death of Wagner. (March) *The Ladies' Paradise* (*Au Bonheur des Dames*). (30 April) Death of Manet

1884 (March) *The Bright Side of Life* (*La Joie de vivre*). Preface to catalogue of Manet exhibition

1885 (March) *Germinal*. (12 May) Begins writing *The Masterpiece (L'Œuvre)*. (22 May) Death of Victor Hugo. (23 December) First instalment of *The Masterpiece* appears in *Le Gil Blas*

1886 (27 March) Final instalment of *The Masterpiece*, which is published in book form in April

1887 (18 August) Denounced as an onanistic pornographer in the *Manifesto of the Five* in *Le Figaro*. (November) *Earth*

1888 (October) *The Dream*. Jeanne Rozerot becomes his mistress

1889 (20 September) Birth of Denise, daughter of Zola and Jeanne

1890 (March) *La Bête humaine*

1891 (March) *Money*. (April) Elected President of the Société des Gens de Lettres. (25 September) Birth of Jacques, son of Zola and Jeanne

1892 (June) *La Débâcle*

1893 (July) *Doctor Pascal*, the last of the Rougon-Macquart novels. Fêted on visit to London

1894 (August) *Lourdes*, the first novel of the trilogy *Three Cities*. (22 December) Dreyfus found guilty by a court martial

1896 (May) *Rome*

1898 (13 January) 'J'accuse', his article in defence of Dreyfus, published in *L'Aurore*. (21 February) Found guilty of libelling the Minister of War and given the maximum sentence of one year's imprisonment and a fine of 3,000 francs. Appeal for retrial granted on a technicality. (March) *Paris*. (23 May) Retrial delayed. (18 July) Leaves for England instead of attending court

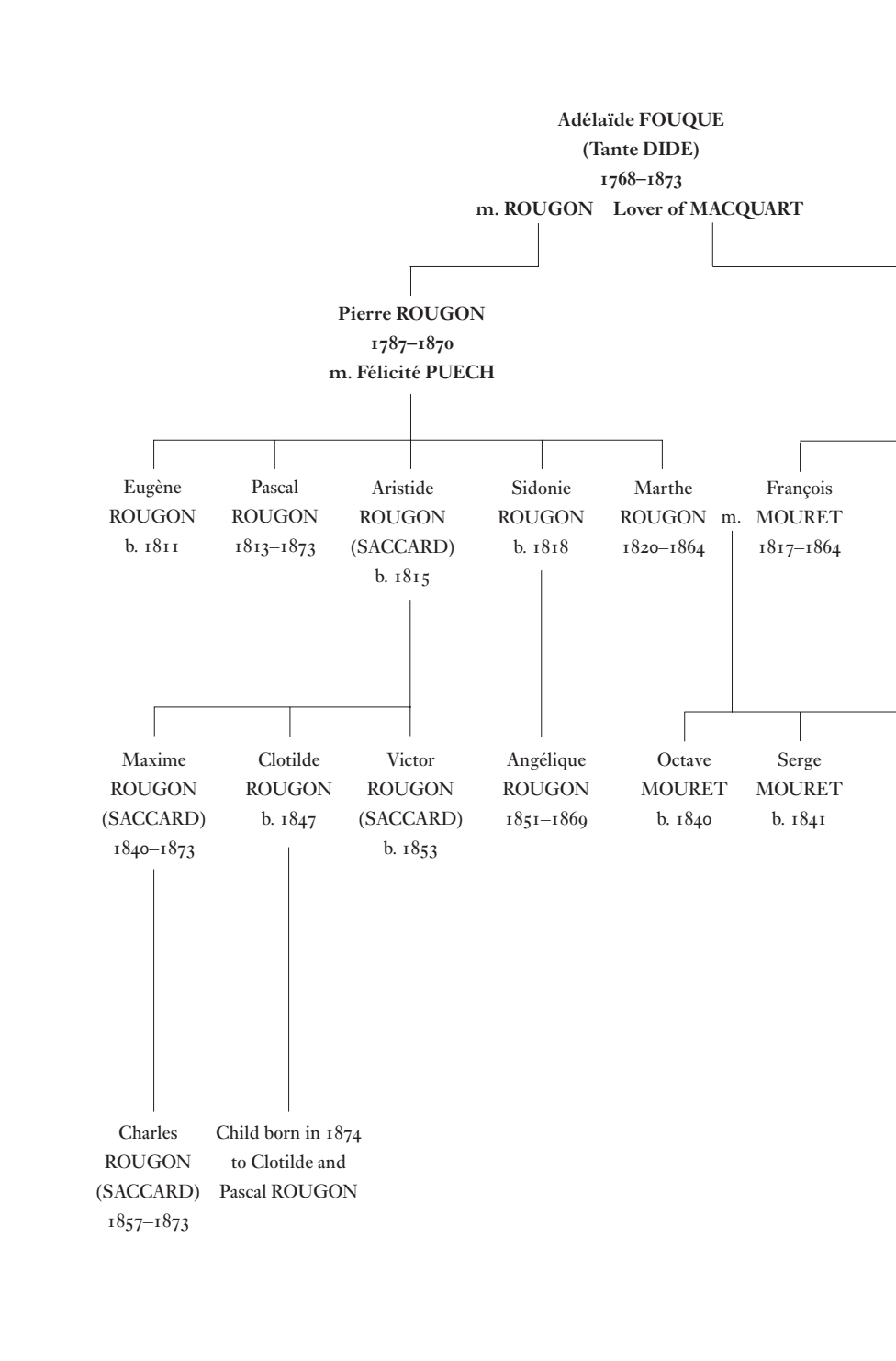
1899 (4 June) Returns to France. (October) *Fecundity*, the first of his *Four Gospels*

1901 (May) *Toil*, the second 'Gospel'

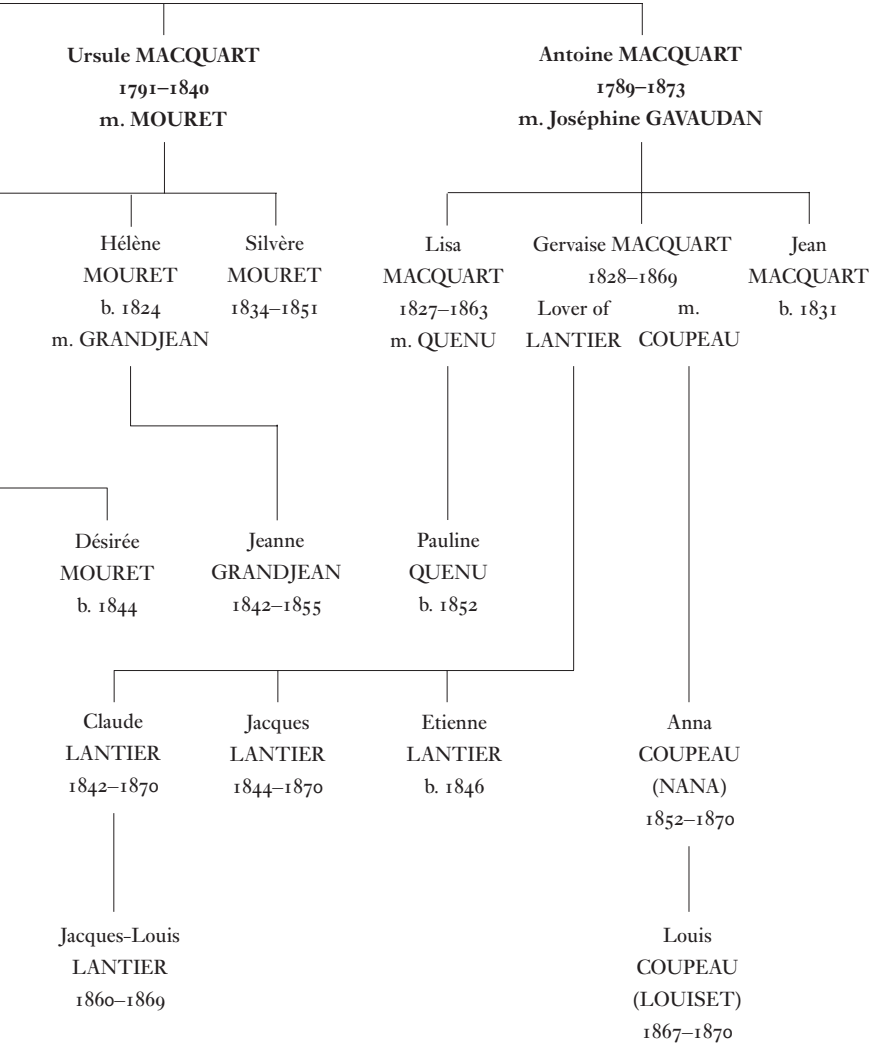
1902 (29 September) Dies of fumes from his bedroom fire, the chimney having been capped either by accident or anti-Dreyfusard design. Wife survives. (5 October) Public funeral

1903 (March) *Truth*, the third 'Gospel', published posthumously. *Justice* was to be the fourth

1908 (4 June) Remains transferred to the Panthéon


Adélaïde FOUQUE
(Tante DIDE)
1768–1873
m. ROUGON
Lover of MACQUART
Pierre ROUGON
1787–1870
m. Félicité PUECH
Eugène ROUGON b. 1811
Pascal ROUGON 1813–1873
Aristide ROUGON (SACCARD) b. 1815
Sidonie ROUGON b. 1818
Marthe ROUGON 1820–1864
m.
François MOURET 1817–1864
Maxime ROUGON (SACCARD) 1840–1873
Clotilde ROUGON b. 1847
Victor ROUGON (SACCARD) b. 1853
Angélique ROUGON 1851–1869
Octave MOURET b. 1840
Serge MOURET b. 1841
Charles ROUGON (SACCARD) 1857–1873
Child born in 1874 to Clotilde and Pascal ROUGON

FAMILY TREE OF THE ROUGON-MACQUART



DOCTOR PASCAL