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BEYOND THE BOURSE: ZOLA, EMPIRE, AND THE JEWS

Puis, apercevant du monde à sa gauche, deux hommes et une femme, il eut l'idée de les questionner. Mais, à son approche, la femme s'enfuit, les hommes l'écartèrent du geste, menaçants; et il en vit d'autres, et tous l'évitaient, filaient entre les broussailles, comme des bêtes rampantes et sournoises, vêtus sordidement, d'une saleté sans nom, avec des faces louches de bandits. Alors, en remarquant que les morts, derrière ce vilain monde, n'avaient plus de souliers, les pieds nus et blêmes, il finit par comprendre que c'étaient là de ces rôdeurs qui suivaient les armées allemandes, des détrousseurs de cadavres, toute une basse juiverie de proie, venue à la suite de l'invasion.

In 1892 when it was published, this forbidding literary tableau depicting the corpse-strewn aftermath of France's 1870 defeat by the Germans would have felt familiar in more ways than one. The apocalyptic tenor of the description suited the hand-wringing with which the loss that cost France its provinces of Alsace and Lorraine had been received. To readers of Édouard Drumont's best-selling 1886 anti-Semitic treatise *La France juive*, the passage also inevitably recalled a central argument of Drumont's polemic, one he had not invented but that he probably did more than anyone to propagate: namely, that the Franco-Prussian War had unleashed on France a hoard of German Jews bent on exploiting their host country. Spurious though it was, this narrative could draw reinforcement from the very real emigration toward the center of France of the approximately 10,000 Jews who chose French citizenship upon Germany's 1871 annexation of Alsace and Lorraine. Settling primarily in Paris, these displaced French Jews keyed resentment among their new neighbors (Lindemann 209). The resulting myth of Judeo-Germanic invasion gained sufficient currency that even Émile Zola gave it some measure of credence—a fact evinced by the passage above, drawn from his novel *La Débâcle* chronicling the final collapse of the Second Empire in the mud of Sedan (742–43).

Such an occasional brush by Zola with Drumontian conspiracy theory explains why Theodor Adorno could once remark that “no matter how energetically Zola, the defender of Captain Dreyfus, fought against hatred of the Jews, elements can be found in his own works which could be classed as

identical with official anti-Semitism" (147). Adorno perhaps overdramatizes the case, but not by much. How is it that so eloquent and renowned a foe of anti-Semitism as Zola continued to populate his novels with coarse Jewish stereotypes, even after he had taken his impassioned public stances in support of French Jews? How, for instance, could Zola declare so sensibly in his 1902 novel about the Dreyfus Affair, *Vérité*, that "il n'y avait pas de question juive, il n'y avait que la question de l'argent entassé," only immediately to proffer as archetypally vampirical a Jew as the predatory financier Baron Nathan, with his "nez épais" and his "yeux de proie enfoncés sous de profondes arcades sourcilières" (68–69)? Why this schizophrenic rhythm of exoneration and indictment?

Zola's famous biological determinism offers an answer. In "Pour les juifs," an 1896 article published in *Le Figaro*, Zola takes anti-Semites to task for denouncing Jewish avarice—but not because he considers the accusation untrue. Of the Jews' supposed "besoin du lucre" and "amour de l'argent," Zola declares flatly that "tout cela est vrai." The abruptness of the concession to anti-Semitic discourse functions rhetorically to contrast the implied banality of these observations with the depth of Zola's impending diagnosis. "Si l'on constate le fait, il faut l'expliquer," he scolds, before citing the historical relegation of the Jews to the financial trades by their Gentile oppressors as evidence that "les juifs, tels qu'ils existent aujourd'hui, sont notre œuvre, l'œuvre de nos dix-huit cents ans d'imbécile persécution." Yet the content of the concession proves no less starkly literal. Jews love money, Zola postulates, because centuries of usury have produced accumulated physiological results in the usurer: "La cervelle assouplie, exercée par des siècles d'hérédité," Jews are conditioned in their very biology to turn a profit (428). If Zola grants the Jews an exculpatory asterisk next to the anti-Semitic thesis of innate Jewish avarice, he simultaneously legitimizes the slur by furnishing it an elaborate socio-scientific basis.

Zola's denunciations of anti-Semitism thus did not preclude representing Jews in unflattering terms. Zola could deploy essentializing fantasies about Jewish cupidity while disagreeing nonetheless that such supposed racial shortcomings justified programmatic hatred. Adorno's two Zolas, in other words, coincide plausibly (if not pleasantly) enough, to the point that the whole question emerges as something of a red herring. Sensational as the juxtaposition between Zola's anti-Semitic caricatures and denunciations of anti-Semitism remains, little is gained from contrasting the two. Or rather, little is gained from sketching the contrast in absolute terms, as if Zola's best and worst tendencies were locked in a Manichean duel for the soul of the author. That is because Zola's anti-anti-Semitism does more than temper the blame he elsewhere ascribes to Jews. It also triggers a perspectival shift that finds him looking beyond the Jew for world-explanatory answers. This effort, we shall see,

requires for Zola a problematically imperial frame of reference. And despite Zola's conscious and creditable attempt, in his anti-anti-Semitism, to look beyond the Jew, the nature of the gesture proves bound up in a discourse about Jews premised on anti-Semitic assumptions—even if, in a twist, Zola takes as his foil anti-Semites themselves.

In these respects, Zola partakes in what I want to argue is a larger, under-recognized nineteenth-century discourse that, while taking aim at critiques of Jews, in fact recuperates anti-Semitic tropes toward unique ideological ends. Nietzsche engaged in something similar, as did Marx earlier in the century, points to which I will return. Suffice it to say for now that the interest and specificity of this involuted discourse rest in more than the observation that anti-anti-Semitism is not always immune to what it seeks to denounce.¹ The choice of anti-Semitism as foil also provided key conceptual scaffolding to those who in the nineteenth century sought to think beyond politics and the nation-state. Zola's utopic imperialism, Nietzsche's Europeanism, and Marx's socialism all emerged reinforced from an encounter with Judaism that, filtered through the lens of anti-anti-Semitism, seemed to offer justification for a meta-physical rescaling of perspective. That rescaling, I will conclude, helped forge an imperial racism shaped as much by arguments against anti-Semitism as by the continental ur-model for racism offered by anti-Semitism itself.

* * *

Zola's 1891 novel *L'Argent* opens in 1864 on its protagonist Aristide Saccard, a veteran speculator who has lost the real estate fortune accumulated earlier in the *Rougon-Macquart*. Awed by the possibilities of the Bourse, the Parisian stock market exchange reaching new heights of popularity during this time, Saccard decides to launch a gigantic bank, the Banque Universelle. Saccard subsequently meets Paul and Caroline Hamelin, a brother and sister back from a long stay in Egypt and Syria. His imagination inflamed by Caroline's poetic accounts of her travels and her engineer brother's ambitious but underfunded industrial plans for the renewal of virgin lands in Turkey and the Levant, Saccard decides to focus the Banque Universelle's attentions eastward. This strategy proves irresistible to investors fascinated with the Orient in all its imagined biblical and Arabian Nights splendor. After a stunning ascent comes an even swifter fall, as the backroom manipulations of Saccard and his equally larcenous coterie of insiders precipitate the bank's spectacular demise. Even as things crumble in Paris, however, a few of the bank's Eastern projects continue to flourish, marking the utopic stirrings of an "humanité de demain" in an Oriental world far away (398).

1. Jonathan Judaken offers a thoughtful reflection on the latter point (39).

France's relation to that world in *L'Argent* can only be characterized as imperialist. Despite Zola's wry commentary on the avidity of an investing public whose Ali Baba dreams make the Banque Universelle's Oriental projects so initially successful, the unquestioned suppositions of those projects—that Turks or Levantines are incapable of fructifying their own lands, and that by extension it falls to the West to accomplish what the East cannot—remain the suppositions of imperialist logic. Projecting back onto the Second Empire the colonial chauvinism of the age of empire in which Zola wrote his novel, *L'Argent*'s narrator punctuates Paul Hamelin's exposition of his plans for a vast Eastern transportation syndicate with the breathless assessment that "rien n'était, à la fois, d'un organisateur de plus de flair, ni d'un meilleur citoyen: c'était l'Orient conquis, donné à la France" (62).

Henri Mitterand suggests that the unaccomplished Turkish designs of Eugène Bontoux, president of the ill-fated, real-life Union Générale bank upon which the Banque Universelle is modeled, might have steered Zola toward the Orient (1272). Whether or not this is true, there is no doubt that Zola set out in *L'Argent* to fictionalize one of the resounding French financial disasters of the second half of the nineteenth century. Founded in 1878, the Union Générale benefited from the charismatic salesmanship of Bontoux, an engineer and entrepreneur who pitched the bank to investors as a Catholic enterprise. The bank, Bontoux claimed, would restore financial security to a dispossessed papacy whose last remnant of the Papal States had been wrested away in 1870 by the recently unified Kingdom of Italy (an event received in France as both a religious and a national affront, since the seizure occurred when France, occupied by the Franco-Prussian War, could no longer maintain the garrison Napoleon III had used to maintain protective sovereignty over the Pope's Roman enclave). With unprecedented financial backing from the clergy, conservative nobility, and other fervent Catholics both humble and rich, the Union Générale engaged in all manners of industrial investments stretching from France to the Balkan outskirts of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Unfortunately, Bontoux proved less scrupulous in his business practices than in his attendance to Catholic anxieties. Following an epic period of feverish speculation that allowed the bank to quadruple its capital in just a few short years, 1882 brought total collapse. Gnawed from within by its risky penchant for speculating on its own stock shares, as well as by a host of other likely chicaneries large and small, the bank left in its wake a swathe of financial destruction that would loom large in the French psyche for years to come.

In the aftermath of the Union Générale's demise, many attributed the crash to short selling by the Rothschild family and the usual shady cabal of Jewish financiers. Bontoux himself helped shape this fiction, first by overtly positioning his bank as a challenge to the "haute banque juive," and later by accusing

the Rothschilds of having targeted his bank in retaliation. Historians of French anti-Semitism cite the crash as a trigger for the wave of anti-Semitism that swept over the country during the remainder of the decade.² Novelists did their part to ensure that the failure of the Union Générale, and the lessons supposedly to be drawn from it about Jewish treachery, lodged deeply in the national consciousness. Mitterand catalogs nearly a dozen novels produced in the subsequent few months and years that were directly or likely inspired by the crash (1242). *L'Argent* represents the best-known entry in this literary corpus.

Readers of *L'Argent* need not look hard for evidence that Zola had internalized the easy association between the Union Générale episode and the commonplace of Jewish financial domination. Zola populates the world of the Bourse with a veritable taxonomy of Jewish speculators and middlemen as united in their essentialized typicality as in their obsessive love of money. Kolb, “dont le nez en bec d’aigle [. . .] décelait l’origine juive,” spends his days surrounded by shovelfuls of gold pieces that he converts into ingots for the purpose of arbitrage (109). The villainous Busch, who makes a disagreeable living enforcing debts he has purchased on the cheap, is first introduced as he peers, “extasié,” at the way a ruby catches the sunlight. Around him teems

toute une juiverie malpropre, de grasses faces luisantes, des profils desséchés d’oiseaux voraces, une extraordinaire réunion de nez typiques, rapprochés les uns des autres, ainsi que sur une proie, s’acharnant au milieu de cris gutturaux, et comme près de se dévorer entre eux. (24)

Nathansohn, whose “flair de juif” causes him to bet successfully against the Banque Universelle even if this means betraying his associate Saccard (327), inspires another character to remark “qu’il faut être juif” in order to successfully play the stock market; “sans ça, inutile de chercher à comprendre, on n’y a pas la main” (30). And above them all reigns Gundermann, the novel’s James de Rothschild figure and the undisputed “maître de la Bourse et du monde” toward whose fortune flow inexorably “tous les fleuves de l’or” (21, 90–91).

Yet having established the novel’s panoramic backdrop of low-level, reflexive anti-Semitic caricature, Zola suddenly offers up a rebuke of overt anti-Semitism. Saccard’s hatred of and rivalry with Gundermann, patterned after Bontoux’s real-life antagonism for the Rothschilds, occasion anti-Semitic rants by the banker designed to mark a distance between Zola and the prejudices

2. See, for example, Katz 293–94; Poliakov 290; and Wilson 248–49.

of his flawed hero. On his way to see Gundermann, Saccard launches into an anti-Semitic mental tirade whose irrationality and hypocrisy the narrator pointedly underlines:

Ah! Le juif! [Saccard] avait contre le juif l'antique rancune de race, qu'on trouve surtout dans le midi de la France; et c'était comme une révolte de sa chair même, une répulsion de peau qui, à l'idée du moindre contact, l'emplissait de dégoût et de violence, en dehors de tout raisonnement, sans qu'il pût se vaincre. Mais le singulier était que lui, Saccard, ce terrible brasseur d'affaires, ce bourreau d'argent aux mains louches, perdait la conscience de lui-même, dès qu'il s'agissait d'un juif, en parlait avec une âpreté, avec des indignations vengeresses d'honnête homme, vivant du travail de ses bras, pur de tout négoce usuraire. (91)

In a second jeremiad against the Jews, Saccard blames his bank's failure on the "sale juif" Gundermann, just as Bontoux had accused the Rothschilds of toppling the Union Générale. But the saintly Caroline, Zola's mouthpiece throughout the novel, calmly demurs:

Quelle singulière chose! murmura tranquillement Mme Caroline, avec son vaste savoir, sa tolérance universelle. Pour moi, les juifs, ce sont des hommes comme les autres. S'ils sont à part, c'est qu'on les y a mis. (385)

This is the Zola so fondly remembered for later entreating his readers to eschew what in 1897 he termed the "monomanie féroce" of anti-Semitism ("Lettre à la jeunesse" 428).

Evidence points to a change of heart by Zola during the preparation and writing of *L'Argent* that perhaps explains the novel's herky-jerky discourse about Jews. Critics have observed that *L'Argent* does not reprise Bontoux's version of events, according to which Jewish financiers had joined with other anti-Catholic forces to sink the Union Générale (Grant 961; Mitterand 1259). In the novel, Saccard's own illegal manipulations are enough to send the Banque Universelle hurtling toward disaster; Gundermann merely profits from the inevitable, delivering a coup de grâce to the bank in the process. It seems, however, that Zola began the project amenable to Bontoux's anti-Semitic conspiracy theory. Richard Grant has shown that according to Zola's detailed notes for the novel, the novelist initially reserved for Gundermann a rather more sinister role:

Je vois que le plus simple serait de faire de mon banquier juif, un juif d'origine prussienne, qui fait des vœux pour le triomphe de

l'Allemagne, tout bonnement, et qui la soutiendrait volontiers avec son argent, tout en étant assez prudent pour ne pas se découvrir. (qtd. in Grant 960)

Grant rightfully points out that the sentiment might as well have belonged to Drumont, who accused Protestant Germany of making common cause with the Jews against Catholic France (960). Thus motivated, the treacherous first iteration of Gundermann would have had every reason to behave according to Bontoux's delusional script. But Zola's mania for research led him away from this temptation. The court case prompted by the crash furnished Zola with accounts of the bank's various imprudences and illegalities. Zola's interviews with the banker Georges Lévy disabused Zola of any remaining notion that Jews had orchestrated the downfall of the Union Générale. Given the sheer scale of the forces at work in the Bourse, Lévy explained to Zola, one might profitably predict—but never actually provoke—a given shift in the market (Mitterand 1258–59). “La vérité est à la Bourse une force toute-puissante,” noted Zola in summary, adding that “la logique règne. C'est elle qui agit en fin de compte” (qtd. in Mitterand 1259). Lévy's assessment enters the novel in the form of Gundermann's patient, calculating investment strategy:

Sa théorie était qu'on ne provoquait pas les événements à la Bourse, qu'on pouvait au plus les prévoir et en profiter, quand ils s'étaient produits. La logique seule régnait, la vérité était, en spéculation comme ailleurs, une force toute-puissante. Dès que les cours s'exagéreraient par trop, ils s'effondreraient: la baisse alors se ferait mathématiquement, il serait simplement là pour voir son calcul se réaliser et empocher son gain. (202)

Having initially flirted with a more villainous Gundermann, Zola ultimately opted for a version of events in which his Rothschild figure merely capitalizes on the damage Saccard has already caused himself.

Zola, however, was of too eschatological a cast of mind simply to accept that Jewish maneuvers might prove subordinate to so abstractly neutral a force as “logic.” Mankind, for Zola, must be moving toward some destiny or another. “Sans la luxure, on ferait beaucoup d'enfants?,” asks Saccard early on, advancing the analogical formula that will become the novel's touchstone: without the excesses of speculation, modern industrial progress would be impossible, just as the excesses of lust render possible the propagation of the species (135). Money, according to Zola's dialectical reasoning, is the fertilizing dung heap from which a new humanity will spring in the East from the ruins of the West. Typically for the era of decadentist alarm in which he wrote, Zola advances that the metropole has fallen prey to a devouring capitalism for which the Jew represents a privileged signifier; and typically for the era

of empire, he prescribes the magical counter-properties of a growing imperial periphery.

But unlike, say, Melchior de Vogüé, a contemporary who later in the decade would seek salvation abroad for a supposedly Jew-ridden France, Zola never considered the imperial periphery a regenerative staging ground from which to purge the metropole of its Semitic decadence.³ Rather, he located in the empire an opportunity to transcend a metropolitan level of analysis dominated by fears of the Jew—a gesture that, though certainly conditioned by unsavory assumptions about Jewish financial preeminence in France, also represents an attempt to exorcise his own dependence on the reductive explanatory power of anti-Semitic ideology.

Zola's notes for *L'Argent* reflect his desire to transcend anti-Semitic ideology's obsessive explanation of every phenomenon in terms of the Jew. Writing in his preparatory *ébauche*, Zola recorded his ambition to find for his developing story "quelque chose enfin qui montre la force de l'argent par-dessus même cette question des juifs, qui rapetisse tout selon moi" (qtd. in Mitterand 1244). That "quelque chose" required a scale that would allow Zola sufficient perspective from which to pan back and reveal the epic order of things. Though Zola was already a past master of the technique—a defining aspect, indeed, of the Zolian style—his new novel would approach things on a supranational scale unprecedented in *Les Rougon-Macquart*. At first, Zola simply imagined a vaguely defined "lande déserte, où une ville, un nouveau peuple pousserait, sous l'effort de la spéculation, tandis que là-bas à Paris tout craquerait dans le jeu" (qtd. in Mitterand 1251). From there the Orient logically imposed itself. Bontoux's real-life Oriental designs aside, no such "lande déserte" was more readily available to the French imagination than the topos of the fertile but neglected Oriental desert, its biblical fecundity dormant beneath what *L'Argent*'s narrator calls "l'ignorance et la crasse des siècles" (75). The nineteenth century's "Renaissance orientale," as Raymond Schwab has dubbed it, had consecrated the Romantic notion of a fusion of Occident and Orient in which mankind would be reborn, a notion dear to the Saint-Simonians whose mystical progressivism saturates Zola's novel. If Zola was to pick a virgin site for the cradle of a new civilization, it was hard to miss the archetype of such renewal into which the Orient had long been constructed.

All of this explains why the same character, Caroline, articulates both the novel's defense of the Jews and its vision of Oriental renewal. The two in effect represent different facets of the same project. Caroline closes the novel with a rhapsodic meditation on the "nouvelles moissons d'hommes" emerging in the East from the "ruines chaudes encore" of the Banque Universelle

3. Vogüé's 1899 novel *Les Morts qui parlent*, with its conquering colonial heroes coming home from Africa, is paradigmatic in this respect.

(397–98), capping her role throughout the novel as an ambassador for Zola's vitalist conviction in the circle of life. The more of the world Zola manages in this fashion to include in his philosophical frame, the easier it becomes to dismiss Jewish financial domination as something rather less primordial than the world-moving force anti-Semitic doctrine held it to be. Measured against the (imperial) ebb and flow of life itself, Zola proposes, Jewish influence becomes but a detail in a grander metaphysical scheme.

Zola had not always been, nor would he always be, an imperial enthusiast. His zeal in *L'Argent* for "l'Orient conquis, donné à la France" revises the skepticism about imperial investments previously on display in *Les Rougon-Macquart*. Sixteen novels earlier in *La Curée*, Zola had ridiculed the "Mille et une nuits" delusions peddled to investors in the "Société générale des Ports du Maroc," a colossal boondoggle helmed by one of Saccard's many dubious associates (396, 418). Though Zola again mocked the Ali Baba dreams of Saccard's hapless shareholders in *L'Argent*, he now added a caveat: in the virgin promise of a conquered Orient, the basest of motives might still yield civilization-enhancing results. During the rest of his career, Zola would toggle between these two dialectical poles of empire in unpredictable fashion. The political intrigue of *Paris*, the 1898 coda to Zola's three-novel *Trois villes* cycle, revolves around systematic graft associated with an African railroad project. This did not stop Zola from doubling down the following year on the nascent imperial fervor of *L'Argent*, delivering in his 1899 novel *Fécondité* an extended panegyric on the colonial bliss awaiting France in the Sudan. Three years later, in *Vérité*, the pendulum swings back toward skepticism, with the reader learning that the Jewish Baron Nathan has emerged "engraissé encore d'un vol récent de cent millions, une affaire coloniale" (250).

There is, nonetheless, a certain consistency about Zola's representations of empire. Subtly but steadily, Zola works to uncouple the imperial from the realm of Jewish financial domination. To be sure, Baron Nathan's "affaire coloniale" in *Vérité* at first seems to recycle the theme of the colonially conspiring Jew, a figure that had emerged from suspicions about the financial motives for France's late-century frenzy of imperial expansion into Africa and Southeast Asia.⁴ Significantly, however, Zola goes on to describe Baron Nathan's ill-gotten colonial gains as "un colossal butin de rapines qu'il avait dû partager avec une banque catholique" (250; emphasis added). The oblique reference to the Catholic Banque Universelle in *L'Argent* recalls how, in that novel, it was in fact the Catholic speculator Saccard—and not the panoply of Jews surrounding him—who hatched that novel's imperial schemes.

4. The best-known literary rendition of this figure is Walter, the Jewish newspaper owner whose corrupt hand in France's fictional invasion of Morocco provides Guy de Maupassant's 1885 novel *Bel-Ami* its background scandal.

In *Paris*, Zola likewise makes the kingpin of the African railroad conspiracy a degenerate Gentile bourgeois, Duvillard, rather than his Jewish rival Steinberger. One of four brothers who, like the real-life Rothschild brothers, are spread across various financial capitals in Europe, Steinberger is said by the narrator to participate in his brothers' "secrète association" wielding "un pouvoir formidable, une souveraineté internationale et toute-puissante sur les marchés financiers de l'Europe" (38). But there is a chink in the armor: Steinberger is "cependant le moins riche des quatre," and his financial dominion is contested by a Gentile counterpart, Duvillard, who counters the Steinberger family's continental influence with an intercontinental influence all his own (38). My point is that what matters more to Zola than the probity or justifiability of the imperial project is that it simply exists, that it does so more or less independently of the Jewish sphere, and that it consequently affords him a totalizing perspective over and above the anti-Semitic conspiracy narrative "qui rapetisse tout."

Hence did Zola's anti-anti-Semitic pronouncements in *L'Argent* require an imperial, Archimedean recalibration in vantage point. Just as importantly, Zola's imperial turn was itself prompted by his interest in making an anti-anti-Semitic statement; after all, it was against the canvas of a romanticized, implicitly colonized Orient that he managed to look beyond the depredations of the Bourse and its Jews for a larger, more optimistic human truth. That such a truth should come at the expense of an imperial subaltern, effaced throughout, makes the enterprise obviously problematic. But so does its subtle premise about Jews. Zola's anti-anti-Semitism certainly rejects a key representation by ideological anti-Semites of the Jews as prime movers at the center of a world conspiracy. At the same time, though, Zola's attempted imperial transcendence of anti-Semitism encodes another questionable construct, namely, that Jewish financial hegemony in France is sufficient to blind even anti-Semites to their own participation in the resulting order. "Je connais déjà des chrétiens qui sont des juifs très distingués," he ironizes in "Pour les juifs" (428). Zola means to suggest that financial acumen is accessible to non-Jews, and he does so within the context of a reasonable-sounding entreaty to French Gentiles that they simply work harder, rather than complain about Jewish successes. Yet by designating as "juif" the very notion of financial ascendancy, whether or not that ascendancy belongs to actual Jews, Zola naturalizes the idea of the imposition by Jews of their ethos on society at large.

That presumed imposition echoes classically anti-Semitic anxieties about Christianity's historical and theological debt to the Jews in its midst. So, too, Zola implies, does capitalist France march to the tune of its most potent minority. It is a "weak" version of the "strong" anti-Semitic thesis: rejecting, to his credit, any literal notion that "les juifs, comme on veut nous en convaincre, [sont] les maîtres absolus du pouvoir et de l'argent" ("Pour les juifs" 429),

Zola nonetheless posits a systemic uptake of the “Jewish” temperament. The surprise is that, for Zola, anti-Semites themselves prove least aware of this synecdochic annexation of the national whole by an ethnic part. Devoid of perspective on the possibility that if the Jews “sont à part, c’est qu’on les y a mis,” Zola’s anti-Semites similarly lack perspective on their complicity in the Jewishness they decry.

In fact, to hear Zola describe them, anti-Semites might as well *be* Jews. We have seen how *L’Argent*’s narrator tweaks the anti-Semitic Saccard for hypocritically railing against “Jewish” behavior he himself exhibits (a reciprocity reinforced by the fact that, as Mitterand proposes, Saccard’s adventures may also have been inspired by those of the disgraced Jewish bankers Jules-Isaac Mirès and Émile and Isaac Péreire [1237–38]). Anti-Semites elsewhere become Jews, at least figuratively, when in *Vérité* Zola makes the Jew-baiting Catholic Church exploit the murder of a Jewish child. Turning on its head the ancient blood libel according to which Jews ritually sacrificed Christian children, Zola here slyly inscribes the Dreyfus-era anti-Semitic Church within what in *Paris* he calls the “vieux rêve sémite” of its Jewish forebears (232).⁵

Making anti-Semites his target, then, Zola paradoxically underscores the Jewish influence they unwittingly reproduce. But anti-Semites provide Zola more than just a mechanism for softening, behind an anti-anti-Semitic stance, his critique of a putatively Jewish modernity. Had he focused in *L’Argent* solely on Jewish financial chicanery in the Bourse, Zola would merely have indulged in xenophobia, flogging the usual narrative of a host nation beset by German-Jewish aliens like Kolb, Busch, Nathansohn, and Gundermann. By tackling anti-Semitism as well, however, Zola turns further afield. What Zola’s myopic anti-Semites overlook is scale: just as they obviously inhabit a greater “Jewishness” risen from below, they are also incapable of the lofty analytical remove from which, for Zola, the Jewish question recedes in importance. Considered from this standpoint, the imperial tenor of Zola’s anti-anti-Semitism establishes an interesting symmetry. If, at the national level, the sensibilities of a Jewish part have unduly permeated the French whole, Zola proposes to rectify matters by infusing an even larger whole—*L’Argent*’s Oriental empire-in-progress—with the still-salvageable energies of French ingenuity that will replicate for mankind what has degraded at home. To a theological model of Jewish exemplarity that, in his secularized and corrupted version of it, sees Jewish particularity deleteriously translated into a social universal, Zola opposes the more Christlike leadership of a nation that patiently sets the

5. Likewise in Zola’s universe can the Jew become an anti-Semite, something Baron Nathan demonstrates in *Vérité* by cravenly embracing the anti-Semitism of his Gentile aristocratic protectors.

example for all. Zola would later recapitulate this distinction in wholly imperial terms. In his notes for *Justice*, the planned final novel in his aptly named *Quatre Évangiles* cycle, Zola metaphorizes the struggle for global preeminence as a contrast between the violence of the Old Testament and the benevolence of the New: the British, “ayant pris au Juif son Jéhovah” by anointing themselves an imperial “peuple élu,” must cede the global crown to a new Gallic Messiah, “la France messie, rédemptrice, sauveuse” charged as “nation directrice” with exporting democracy and science to the world (398–99).

The intended fate of the Jews in any such supercessionary script, even a secularized one like this, is to fade away. Zola prescribes their disappearance into the social body: “Embrasser les juifs, pour les absorber et les confondre en nous. Nous enrichir de leur qualités, puisqu'ils en ont” (“Pour les juifs” 429). That is what comes to pass in *Vérité* when, in a future Republican utopia racially homogenized by generations of intermarriage, the descendants of Zola's noble Jewish stand-ins for the beleaguered Dreyfus cease to exist as Jews.⁶ Yet to erase the Jew in this fashion, however peaceably, is simply to reprise the commonplace of the Jew as an impediment to national cohesion. At the global-imperial scale of France's messianic redemption and reshaping of the world—the scale to have been embraced by *Justice*'s never-completed portrait of peace on earth—it is actually anti-Semites who, unable to see beyond the Jewish question and their national blinders, impede the cohesion of Zola's greater Humanity.

Stepping into the fly-in-the-ointment role typically reserved for their antagonists, anti-Semites here again become Jews. But the two are not exactly interchangeable. The Jews' understood status as a “nation dans la nation” and “secte internationale, sans patrie réelle” (“Pour les juifs” 427), qualities that rendered them suspect in the century of national unifications, posed a less obvious threat to supranational solidarity. Nietzsche, the theorist of a new “European man and the abolition of nations” (*Human, All-Too-Human* 61), in fact considered the Jews' nonnational bent the possible catalyst for a pan-European turn: “A thinker who has the development of Europe on his conscience will, in all his projects for this future, take into account the Jews [. . .] as the provisionally surest and most probable factors in the great play and fight of forces.” By contrast, Nietzsche castigates anti-Semites (whose “disease” he confesses to having once shared) for their particularistic attachment to national configurations grafted willy-nilly onto the deeper Greco-Roman tradition uniting Europe (*Beyond Good and Evil* 376–78).

As with Zola, however, Nietzsche's anti-anti-Semitism turns back in on itself. These anti-Semites, these enemies of Europe, are themselves inheritors

6. On this, see Maurice Samuels' contribution to the present volume.

of the Jews, for they are “men of *ressentiment*” (*Genealogy of Morals* 560), infected by the famous slave morality that Nietzsche attributes to the ancient Hebrews and that, via their Christian successors, has rotted the European fiber. Anti-Semites, for Nietzsche, are contemptible in their hatred of a modern Jewry whose “resolute faith” he genuinely admires. Differently, though, and perhaps even more critically, anti-Semites perfectly incarnate the “miraculous feat of an inversion of values” achieved by ancient Judaism (*Beyond Good and Evil* 377, 298). That inversion, Nietzsche maintains, occurred when an enslaved people elevated their own worst qualities—weakness, poverty, abnegation—into a universal morality that would eventually conquer the world. Anti-Semites best illustrate the extent of the inversion not only because, in their *ressentiment*, they most recuperate the slavish resentment of the ancient Jews, but also because they so ironically malign the very people whose damaging spiritual legacy they most reinforce. Anti-Semites, in other words, furnish Nietzsche a shorthand for the potency of the inversion he bemoans. To attack them is thus to attack the “revaluation” effected by the ancient Jews and, in proposing to reverse it, to advance a revaluation of his own—one in which, as Walter Kaufmann observes, Nietzsche takes the Jews as his model (*Beyond Good and Evil* 375, note 21).

What Nietzsche undertook in the 1870s and 1880s, Zola continued in the 1890s. Zola’s explicit anti-anti-Semitism attempts a similar rescaling of perspective partially aimed at the Jews he simultaneously defends. Just as Nietzsche pulls back from the Judeo-Christian “revaluation” of morals and its anti-Semitic dupes to reveal a longer Greco-Roman tradition within which more rightfully to inscribe Europe, so does Zola offer a sweeping, imperial context against which to relativize the Jewish metropolitan influence he concedes. And as much as these maneuvers take their cue, indirectly, from the Jews’ own ostensible knack for turning the tables of scale, they require more than a discourse about or against Jews. They also require a rejoinder to the critique of Jews, a rejoinder that endeavors to demonstrate, at anti-Semitism’s expense, how one’s perspective must continually radiate outward or risk entanglement with the object of critique. Thus do Zola’s myopic anti-Semites prompt him toward a supranational, imperial vantage point; and thus do Nietzsche’s parochial anti-Semites confirm, for him, the importance of looking to a timeless European truth beyond what he considers the “political,” contingent vagaries of national life (*Beyond Good and Evil* 376).

I would go so far as to suggest that in the nineteenth century, a rejoinder to the critique of Jews offered unique rhetorical opportunities for anyone who, like Nietzsche and Zola, sought to think beyond the nation-state. So far I have used the term “anti-anti-Semitism” to describe Zola’s and Nietzsche’s opposition to a modern ideological movement that, after Wilhelm Marr coined the German neologism *Antisemitismus* in 1879, was understood as such. But

already in 1844, Marx had taken a critique of German Jewry as his foil in an essay calling for a more expansive approach to human liberation than what the state might accomplish. No one would mistake that essay, "On the Jewish Question," as an indictment by Marx of anti-Jewish sentiment per se; indeed, Marx takes a dim enough view of the Jews ("What is the secular cult of the Jew? *Haggling*." [236]) for Bernard Lewis to label the essay "one of the classics of anti-Semitic propaganda" (112). Others have maintained that Marx's comments on Jewish emancipation, and attendant pronouncements about Jews, merely constitute an unfortunate device for offering an otherwise legitimate reflection on the deficiencies of liberal political philosophy.⁷ Yet what interests me here as much as Marx's opinion of Jews is his choice of an argument against the Jews as a starting point, and the very specific conceptual moves his response to that argument enables.

In the essay, Marx criticizes his former mentor and fellow Young Hegelian Bruno Bauer for proposing that German Jews were unworthy of political emancipation by the German state since they were not first willing to emancipate themselves from the yoke of religion. Bauer, counters Marx, is guilty of a category mistake, having confused political emancipation for general emancipation. While the modern state might confer certain useful freedoms, like freedom of conscience, it nonetheless largely relegates questions like religion and property to the private realm of "civil society" (220). Real general emancipation, Marx concludes, would function at the level of that larger civil society—at the level of humanity's basic and collective "species-life," as he puts it (230)—to emancipate man from man by transforming the relations of production.

If Marx's critique of Bauer turns on Bauer's too-narrow fixation with Jewish religiosity as a barometer of human enslavement, Marx himself hardly leaves the Jewish question behind in the passage he imagines from political to general emancipation. "The *emancipation of the Jews*," he notoriously declares, "is, in the last analysis, the emancipation of mankind from *Judaism*" (237). Marx means that the Jews, like everyone else, will be free only once the shackles of capital are broken. And implicit in this declaration is a tactic that should by now ring familiar. Bauer, Marx suggests, fails to fully appreciate how, in capital, the Jews' "self-interest" has woven its way into the social fabric (236). For Bauer to place his hopes in the German state is hence to trust an institution that—by virtue of its falsely universalizing abstraction from the material, civil particulars that really matter—in fact mystifies its own subsumption under the larger, "Jewish" social order. To put it simply, at least according to Marx, Bauer's anti-Jewish critique finds him unsuspectingly operating within a Jewish paradigm.

7. Wendy Brown offers a useful summary of the debate surrounding Marx's anti-Semitism in "On the Jewish Question" (91–92).

Marx's solution anticipates what Nietzsche and Zola would do a half century later. Rescaling his perspective, he reaches beyond the conceptual horizon of the nation-state to offer a critique that, unlike the one offered by his anti-Jewish adversary, purports not to inhabit the (Jewish) system it denounces. Granted, Marx would have scoffed at Zola's version of this project. Predicated as the Zolian international program was on French republicanism's evangelical mission to liberate all peoples, Zola's world utopia still represented the kind of political approach to emancipation for which Marx chided Bruno Bauer. Nor was Zola an enthusiast of Marx's socialism, something the feeble Marxist dreams of *L'Argent's* other Busch, Sigismond, make clear. But that is also the point. Whether on the political left (Marx), in the center (Zola), or on the right (Nietzsche), discourses against the critique of Jews could be flexibly deployed to equally ambitious rescaling effect.

Insofar as these totalizing discourses intersected with the European imperialism of the day, they offer a new angle from which to consider the historical relation between anti-Semitism and empire. It is beyond my purview here to examine the relative imperialism exhibited by Marx and Nietzsche, questions that have been debated elsewhere.⁸ Limiting myself to Zola, I would say only that Zola's imperially inflected anti-anti-Semitism complicates the conventional, linear notion that continental discourses about Jews provided a model for encounters with imperial subalterns.⁹ It seems apparent that second-order discourses about Jews (that is, discourses about discourses about Jews) likewise informed France's approach to the imperial periphery. Étienne Balibar has proposed, along these lines, that

the defeat suffered by anti-Semitism after the Dreyfus Affair, which was symbolically incorporated into the ideals of the republican regime, opened up to a certain extent the possibility of a colonial "good conscience" and made it possible for many years for the notion of racism to be dissociated from that of colonization (at least in metropolitan perceptions). (53–54)

To this we can add the Zolian wrinkle that nineteenth-century anti-anti-Semitism constructed anti-Semites into recalcitrant obstacles to a new, global order promised by a benevolent French empire. Transferring, in such a way, a classically anti-Semitic Jewish function from the Jews to anti-Semites,

8. On Nietzsche's imperialism, see Conway.

9. See Heschel, for example, who advances that Christianity's theological appropriation then expurgation of Judaism furnished a template for Europe's more outward-directed patterns of Orientalist domination (21–22). See also Kalmar and Penslar.

anti-anti-Semitism created a new, roving category of imperial perception. While indebted to an existing discourse about inassimilable Jews, that category accommodated a wide range of possible imperial others—including colonized subalterns—whose national attachments and intolerances might, like those of anti-Semites, be understood to obstruct imperial harmony. The Jewish particularism long considered a detriment to national unity was henceforth conjugated into the threat posed by non-Jews to imperial cohesion. That this required Jews *and* anti-Semites to transpire is one of the ironies of history, though logical enough: in their eagerness to align themselves with French power, colonized indigenous Jews in places like Algeria hardly constituted such a threat themselves. Zola, defender of Dreyfus, was no enemy to the Jews. But without realizing it, he was in the vanguard of a development that would subject non-European peoples abroad to treatment once reserved for Jews back home.

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