

## **LITERATURE**

### **Zola and Maupassant: Sex, Scandal and Squalor in Nineteenth Century France**

Denyse Straker MA

**6 weeks**

Thursdays

**Course code:** 18TON358

4, 11, 18, 25 October; 8, 15 November

10.30am – 12.30pm

**Course fee:** £90

**Zola championed human rights but his fiction sometimes depicts women in a negative light. We look at two of his novels: *Thérèse Raquin*, his first successful novel and *Nana* detailing the life of a prostitute. We also study three stories by Zola's disciple, Maupassant, which reflect a dark, violent world.**

The worlds of Therese Raquin and her lover Laurent and other characters on this course are unremittingly gloomy. Emile Zola and Guy de Maupassant were not afraid to address the dark side of the human condition, laying bare the games people play to get what they want in life. Writing just before and during the Franco-Prussian war, these writers depict the France of that time as a place of unrest, poverty, class prejudice and hypocritical behaviour.

Emile Zola was the master of naturalism. His writing explores a world governed by scientific principles, a world where people follow their basic desires like animals and lives are predetermined by forces of nature. His friend and disciple, Guy de Maupassant's tales are realistic depictions of human relationships often with violent or ironic endings. Both authors describe sexual acts, sometimes in graphic detail, giving a pessimistic and disillusioned view of the world at the time.

We start the course with Zola's first successful novel, *Thérèse Raquin* (1867). We go on to study three contrasting stories of Maupassant: 'Boule de Suif', a famous story about hypocrisy, class prejudice and cruelty set against the background of the Franco-Prussian War; 'The Necklace' (Maupassant's famous short story about vanity) and 'Le Horla' – a story concerning the Fantastic – a departure from his usual style. We finish with an overview of another Zola novel, the ninth installment in the 20-volume *Les Rougon-Macquart* series, concerning the life of a prostitute and her conquests.

## Required reading in weekly order

Emile Zola, *Therese Raquin*, London: Penguin, 2004

Emile Zola, *Nana*, Oxford University Press, 1998

Guy de Maupassant, 'Boule de Suif', 'The Necklace' 'Le Horla'

The tutor will be working from the above editions, but please note that any editions are fine. Please allow for different translations.

Handouts of the Maupassant short stories will be available on request. All the texts are available online.

Week 1: Introduction/ Zola's *Therese Raquin*

Week 2: Emile Zola, *Therese Raquin*

Week 3: Guy de Maupassant, 'Boule de Suif'

Week 4: Maupassant, 'The Necklace' and 'Le Horla'

Week 5: Zola, *Nana*

Week 6: Zola, *Nana* and Conclusion

## Additional information

- No prior knowledge needed.
- The course is suitable for beginners, as well as students with some prior knowledge.
- This course allows you to spend time exploring a subject for interest, among like-minded people, without formal assessment.
- There will be discussion activities during the course or between sessions.

## Intended learning outcomes

By the end of the course students will be able to:

- understand what the term 'naturalism' in literature implies, and be able to identify the use and significance of naturalism in the works of Zola and Maupassant.
- be able to put the work into historical context.
- be prepared to present carefully considered arguments and be able to defend a point of view based on textual evidence.
- enjoy group discussion and lively debate.

## About the tutor

Denyse Straker studied for her BA through the University of Kent's part-time programme at the Tonbridge Centre. She went on to do a research MA on depictions of child abuse in literature at the School of European Culture and Languages in Canterbury. She has been teaching Comparative Literature at Kent since 2001, and has taught a wide range of topics on the short course programme at Tonbridge as well as on undergraduate courses at Canterbury. She is particularly interested in American Literature and Women's Studies as well as specialising in Travel Literature.



## Short Course Programme General information, terms & conditions

### How to book a place

These courses are usually very popular so you are advised to apply as soon as possible. Places cannot be held without payment of the course fee.

- Online Booking is preferred. Please visit [www.kent.ac.uk/tonbridge](http://www.kent.ac.uk/tonbridge)
- By post to us at the address below, using the application form in the programme booklet. Please note that you will not receive an acknowledgment of your paper application; your payment will usually be processed when the course becomes financially viable, otherwise we will notify you of cancellation approximately seven days prior to the course. A paper application affirms acceptance of our terms & conditions.

### Course cancellation

As these short courses are self-financing, each course can only proceed if there are sufficient enrolments. Therefore, if a course is cancelled due to insufficient enrolments we aim to notify applicants approximately one week before the course start date; if there is no suitable alternative course, we will refund the appropriate course fee in full. The University of Kent reserves the right to cancel a course for this or any other reason in which case the relevant course fee will be refunded in full. We advise that you do not buy books or other course materials until that particular course is confirmed as taking place: please contact us if you are unsure.

If you find it necessary to cancel your place on a course, please let us know as soon as possible. Refund requests, including the reason, should be made by email or in writing to us at the address below. We reserve the right to retain all or part of the course fee if you request a refund after 14 days of your online booking being made or paper application being received. Discretionary, partial refunds may be made, after the deduction of an administrative handling fee as follows:

- a course fee of up to and including £42 will incur an administrative handling fee of £10.00
- a course fee of £43 and over will incur an administrative handling fee of £12.50.

### The University reserves the right to:

- a) exclude any student if the student's presence is making it difficult for the class to function properly
- b) cancel or amend the length of any course if the circumstances so warrant.

Neither the University of Kent, nor its staff, can be held responsible for any damage, loss or injury, however sustained, suffered by participants attending courses. Insurance is the student's responsibility.

### University Centre Tonbridge

For details of our other courses, news, events and location visit [www.kent.ac.uk/tonbridge](http://www.kent.ac.uk/tonbridge) .

- Parking. There is plenty of public pay and display car parking locally, but please note that only selected car parks permit parking in excess of four hours; detailed information is available from [www.tmbc.gov.uk](http://www.tmbc.gov.uk) . No parking is available here on site.
- Refreshments are not provided; food and drink can be purchased from any of the nearby café outlets - we are closely situated to the High Street and town centre. A hot drink vending machine is usually available on the ground floor of this building.

### Mailing List and data protection

Those attending our courses are automatically added to our database and kept informed about new courses. This information is not released to outside organisations. Please write to us if you do not wish your details to be kept on our database.

***Please contact us if you have any queries or would like to register your email address to receive our course information updates. We look forward to welcoming you here soon.***

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