

Critical Review of *Germinal* by Zola

Introduction

This essay aims at discussing the famous novel *Germinal* by Émile Zola. The novel is the thirteenth book included into a series of twenty one works. It is necessary to mark that like most novels of those times, *Germinal* was first published as a series of chapters in periodicals; after that, the world saw the book as an integral work of literature. The author raised a great number of disputable issues concerning the economic situation in the coal-mining region; the life of ordinary miners is intertwined with riots, sabotages, and accidents.

The story takes place in the mining town of Montsou in France in the 1860s. The protagonist, Étienne Lantier, is an engine man who is searching for a job in the pits. He encounters a girl Catherine and falls in love with her. Unfortunately, not all of Lantier's new acquaintances have a positive influence on him: the anarchist Souvarine seems to deprave the young man's views and impact his behavior. The time described in the story refers to the period of industrialization in France.

The Community of Montsou in the Novel

One of the most interesting aspects of the novel is the description of everyday life of people living in Montsou. It may be surprising for one to see how the citizens of the coal-mining town live their lives disregarding the hardships of their work, poverty of their families, and economical instability within the country; those people just work like their fathers and grandfathers did. The geographical position of the town is not of big significance for this story, as the described situation was common for Europe in the middle of the nineteenth century.

As for the personality of the protagonist, I am of the opinion that he lacked moral strength, self-confidence and ability to make decisions. In the course of the plot development, a reader sees a big number of mistakes made by Lantier.

***Germinal* with a View to Modernity and Globalism**

The novel makes a reader think about the fact that every action experienced by the characters of the story can occur in the life of anyone of us. Étienne Lantier manages to survive in the accident while Catherine dies. A reader sees that he does not feel pity for her. The protagonist decides to go to Paris. A reader may be curious about the answers to a range of questions: why did not he find enough will to have left earlier? Why did he work in the pits? The answer seems to be that the society was latent and free of ambitions, and so was Lantier. It is interesting to compare the described community with the contemporary US society: there seem to be many American citizens who would not change anything either.

Furthermore, it is reasonable to discuss *Germinal* from the perspective of multiculturalism trends. One of the distinctive features of multiculturalism is migration. The novel *Germinal* contains a vivid description of many people who search for a better life and are forced to migrate. Such issue as globalism presupposes spreading of some features, tendencies, and activities throughout the planet. Consequently, the industrialization process that took place in the European countries as well as all over the World can be considered a component of globalism.

Conclusion

The novel *Germinal* by Émile Zola can be considered a masterpiece of the world literature and a gem of French literary heritage. The story described in the work takes place in the French town of Montsou, which is a coal-mining district where miners live with their families. The title of the novel alludes to rising of seeds

in spring; it can be compared with rising of human consciousness and struggle for the industrial revolution. People wanted to live better but encountered different obstacles created by anarchists and corrupted authorities.

Reference List

Zola, E. (2005). *Germinal*. Montana: Kessinger Publishing.