

This dissertation treats of the crowd in the work of Émile Zola, especially in his novel *Germinal*. The objective of the dissertation is not only to analyse the representation of the crowd in this novel and to classify it, but also to reveal the similarities and differences between this representation and the “scientific” observations of “crowd psychologists” at the end of the 19th century, Scipio Sighele, Gabriel Tarde and Gustave Le Bon. We have chosen, as a method of analysis, to combine a close reading of the novel with a sociological approach by using Bourdieu’s construct of literary field and Bakhtin’s chronotope. At the end of our literary analysis we try to look at *Germinal* in a larger context and observe the social determinations which had an impact on it. The point is to try to locate the writer among the other contemporary writers and explain his literary choices from this position.

The depiction of the crowd in the work of Émile Zola, contrary to the approach of Sighele, Tarde and Le Bon, who agreed on the fact that the crowd presents a danger for the society, is more nuanced. Although we can find also a negative interpretation of the crowd in *Germinal* (mainly in the scenes full of violence of the marching crowd), as well as the same women-like emotionality and instability, though there is the same comparison of the crowd behaviour to the primitive and barbaric one and the accent on the change of human behaviour after becoming a part of the crowd, despite the same interpretation of the crowd leader, the crowd in *Germinal* is more human. The crowd appears not only in violent scenes, but also in the scenes of everyday life. There it represents the sense of belonging and solidarity among the miners. By using multiple animal metaphors, the crowd links the people to nature as well.

The thesis proposes several hypotheses for explaining these similarities and differences focusing particularly on the explanation utilizing Bourdieu’s field theory. It

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appears that Zola was situated between two streams of literature: on one hand, he wanted recognition by the Academy and other writers; on the other hand, he wished for general popularity. This position made him choose the literary compromise so as to satisfy both of his objectives.