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Zola, Émile (1840–1902)

French naturalistic novelist, disliked by Tennyson.

Zola's naturalistic novels, notably *Thérèse Raquin* (1867) and *Germinal* (1885), caused a considerable stir when they were translated into English. Tennyson's horror of sexual promiscuity, which emerges in the underlying themes of the *Idylls*, was increased by his reading of these works. He linked Swinburne and Zola as corrupting influences on society because of their stress on the power of bodily appetites – and this became his way of understanding and reworking the Arthurian myths. As an old man, he was still reading and puzzling over Zola, whose work he discussed with Allingham in 1888, asking him, 'How can a book corrupt?' (Allingham 1967: 381).