

SOCIOLOGY AND ITS CONTRIBUTION TO THE RISE OF THE NOVEL

By

Dahlan

(STAIN Palopo)

Abstract

This paper elaborates people and their school who greatly contribute to the development of literary works, particularly novel. Their contributions inspire authors, critics at the development of ideas of literature, some of them such as: Frankfurt school, Avant Garde, and Genetic structuralism and some schools of critique like Neo Marxian ideology Critique and Bordieu. This paper also shows how sociology ideas are successfully applied to the literary works.

Key Words: Sociology, Contribution, and The Rise Of The Novel

I. Introduction

It is unarguable that the development of sociology has made a great influence to the rise of literary works particularly for the novel. As a science, sociology developed ideas that were subsequently applied to the literature. Some founding fathers of sociology introduced the theories of sociology. Karl max's theory of ideology was directed at literature by George Orwell in *Animal Farm*, *Homage to Catalonia*, and *1984*. Max Weber's theory of modernity as cultural rationalisation, which he applied to music, was later applied to all the arts, literature included, and now followed by current author like

Dan Brown. This paper elaborates people and their school who greatly contribute to inspire authors, critics at the development of ideas of literature:

A. The Frankfurt School

Founded in 1923, the Institute for Social Research at the University of Frankfurt developed a distinctive kind of 'critical sociology' indebted to Marx, Weber and Freud. Leading Frankfurt School critics who worked on literature included Adorno, Walter Benjamin and Leo Lowenthal. Adorno's *Notes to Literature*, Benjamin's *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* and Löwentahl's *Literature and the Image of Man* were each influential studies in the

sociology of literature. Löwenthal continued this work at the University of California, Berkeley, during the 1950s.

Adorno's *Notes to Literature* is a collection of essays, the most influential of which is probably 'On Lyric Poetry and Society'. It argued that poetic thought is a reaction against the commodification and reification of modern life, citing Goethe as examples. Benjamin's *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* argued that the extreme 'sovereign violence' of the 16th and 17th century German 'Trauerspiel' (literally mourning play, less literally tragedy) playwrights expressed the historical realities of princely power far better than had classical tragedy.

Habermas succeeded Adorno to the Chair of Sociology and Philosophy at Frankfurt. Habermas's first major work, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* was published in German in 1962, and in English translation as *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* in 1989. It attempted to explain the socio-historical emergence of middle-class public opinion in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Developing a new kind of institutional sociology of literature, it argued that the public sphere had been organised around literary salons in France,

learned and literary societies in Germany, and coffee houses in England. These institutions sustained the early novel, newspaper and periodical press.

B. The sociology of the avant-garde

Peter Bürger was Professor of French and Comparative Literature at the University of Bremen. His *Theorie der Avantgarde* was published in German in 1974 and in English translation in 1984. Like Habermas, Bürger was interested in the institutional sociology of literature and art. He postulated a historical typology of aesthetic social relations, measured along three main axes, the function of the artwork, its mode of production and its mode of reception. This gave him three main kinds of art, sacral, courtly and bourgeois. Bourgeois art, he argued, had as its function individual self-understanding and was produced and received individually. It became a celebration in form of the liberation of art from religion, the court and, eventually, even the bourgeoisie. Modernist art was thus an autonomous social 'institution', the preserve of an increasingly autonomous intellectual class. The 'historical avant-garde' of the inter-war years developed as a movement within and against modernism,

he concluded, as an ultimately unsuccessful revolt against precisely this autonomy. Habermas adopts a very similar approach in his own account of the avant-garde.

C. The sociology of the book trade

Robert Escarpit was Professor of Comparative Literature at the University of Bordeaux and founder of the Centre for the Sociology of Literary Facts. His works included *The Sociology of Literature*, published in French in 1958 and in English translation in 1971, and *The Book Revolution*, published in French in 1965 and in English in 1966. In Durkheimian fashion, Escarpit aimed to concern himself only with the externally-defined 'social facts' of literature, especially those registered in the book trade. His focus fell on the 'community of writers', understood in aggregate as 'generations' and 'teams'. He extended the definition of literature to include all 'non-functional' writing and also insisted that literary success resulted from 'a convergence of intentions between author and reader'.

Analogously empirical studies of the sociology of the book trade were carried

out by Lewis Coser in the United States and Peter H. Mann in Britain.

Lucien Febre and Henri-Jean Martin's *L'Apparition du livre*, first published in French 1958 and in English translation as *The Coming of the Book* in 1976, is strictly speaking a work of social history (Febvre was a leading figure in the *Annales* School of historiography). But it is deeply sociological in character - *Annales* history was determinedly social scientific - and provides a systematic account of the long-run development of the European book trade (the period covered is 1450-1800).

D. Genetic structuralism

Lucien Goldmann was Director of Studies at the School for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences in Paris and founding Director of the Centre for the Sociology of Literature at the Free University of Brussels. Like Escarpit, Goldmann was influenced by Durkheim: hence, his definition of the subject matter of sociology as the 'study of the facts of consciousness'. But he was also interested in developing a sociology of the text. The central task of the literary sociologist, he argued, was to bring out the objective meaning of the literary work by placing it in its historical context, studied as a whole.

Goldmann defined the creating subject as transindividual, that is, as an instance of Durkheim's 'collective consciousness'. Following Marx and Lukács, however, Goldmann also assumed that group consciousness was normally class consciousnesses. The mediating agency between a social class and the work of literature then became the 'world vision', which binds the individual members of a social class together. *Le Dieu caché*, his study of Blaise Pascal and Jean Racine was published in French in 1955 and in English translation as *The Hidden God* in 1964. It identified 'structural homologies' between the Jansenist 'tragic vision', the textual structures of Pascal's *Pensées* and Racine's plays, and the social position of the seventeenth-century 'noblesse de robe'. Goldmann's structuralism was 'genetic' because it sought to trace the genesis of literary structures in extra-literary phenomena. In 1964 Goldmann published *Pour une Sociologie du Roman* translated by Alan Sheridan as *Towards a Sociology of the Novel* in 1974. Like Lukács, Goldmann sees the novel as revolving around the problematic hero's search for authentic values in a degraded society. But Goldmann also postulates a 'rigorous homology' between the literary form of the novel and the economic form of the

commodity. The early novel, he argues, is concerned with individual biography and the problematic hero, but, as competitive capitalism evolves into monopoly capitalism, the problematic hero progressively disappears. The period between the First and Second World Wars witnesses a temporary experiment with the community as collective hero: Goldmann's example is Andre Malraux. But the main line of development is characterised by the effort to write the novel of 'the absence of subjects'. Here, Goldmann's example is the *nouveau roman* of Alain Robbe .

Andrew Milner's *John Milton and the English Revolution* (1981) is essentially an application of Goldmann's genetic structuralism to the study of seventeenth-century English literature.

E. Sociocriticism

Goldmann's sociology of literature remains significant in itself and as a source of inspiration, both positive and negative, to the kind of 'sociocriticism' developed by Edmond Cros, Pierre Zima and their co-workers in France and Canada.

1. Neo-Marxian ideology critique

Marx used the term ideology to denote the inner connectedness of culture, including literature, and class. The philosopher Louis Althusser elaborated on this notion in the early 1970s, arguing that ideology functions so as to constitute biological individuals as social 'subjects' by representing their imaginary relation to their real conditions of existence.

For Althusser himself art was not ideology. But his theory was applied to literature by Macherey in France, Eagleton in Britain and Jameson in the United States. The central novelty of Eagleton's *Criticism and Ideology* was its argument that literature could be understood as 'producing' ideology, in the sense of performing it. Jameson's *The Political Unconscious* argued that literary analysis can be focussed on three distinct levels, 'text', 'ideologeme' and 'ideology of form', each of which has its socio-historical corollary, in the equivalent 'semantic horizon' of political history, society and mode of production. The version of ideology Jameson applies to all three levels is essentially Althusserian. The novelty of his position, however, was to argue for a 'double hermeneutic' simultaneously concerned with ideology and utopia.

Macherey, Eagleton and Jameson were literary critics by profession, but their applications of ideology-critique to literature are sociological in character, insofar as they seek to explain literary phenomena in extra-literary terms.

2. Bourdieu

Bourdieu was Professor of Sociology at the Collège de France and Director of the Centre de Sociologie Européenne. His first major contribution to the sociology of literature (and other arts) was *La Distinction*, published in French in 1979 and in English translation in 1984. It is based on detailed sociological surveys and ethnographic observation of the social distribution of cultural preferences. Bourdieu identified three main zones of taste, 'legitimate', 'middle-brow' and 'popular', which he found to be dominant respectively in the educated sections of the dominant class, the middle classes and the working classes. He described legitimate taste as centred on an 'aesthetic disposition' to assert the primacy of form over function. The 'popular aesthetic', by contrast, is based on continuity between art and life and 'a deep-rooted demand for participation'. Hence, its hostility to representations of objects that in real life are either ugly or immoral. Artistic and

social 'distinction' are inextricably interrelated, he concluded, because the 'pure gaze' implies a break with ordinary attitudes towards the world and, as such, is a 'social break'.

The Rules of Art is more specifically focussed on literature, especially the significance of Gustave Flaubert for the making of modern French literature. Bourdieu postulated a model of 'the field of cultural production' as structured externally in relation to the 'field of power' and internally in relation to two 'principles of hierarchization', the heteronomous and the autonomous. The modern literary and artistic field is a site of contestation between the heteronomous principle, subordinating art to economy, and the autonomous, resisting such subordination. In Bourdieu's map of the French literary field in the late nineteenth century, the most autonomous genre, that is, the least economically profitable - poetry - is to the left, whilst the most heteronomous, the most economically profitable - drama - is to the right, with the novel located somewhere in between. Additionally, higher social status audiences govern the upper end of the field and lower status audiences the lower end. Flaubert's distinctive achievement in

L'Éducation sentimentale was, in Bourdieu's account, to have understood and defined the rules of modern autonomous art.

II. The Rise of the Novel

The description of how influential is the sociology to literary works can successfully be figured out by Ian Watt in *The Rise of the Novel* (1957), a Professor of English at Stanford University. For Watt, the novel's 'novelty' was its 'formal realism', the idea 'that the novel is a full and authentic report of human experience'. His paradigmatic instances showed some famous authors such as Daniel Defoe, Samuel Richardson. Watt argued that the novel's concern with realistically described relations between ordinary individuals, ran parallel to the more general development of philosophical realism, middle-class economic individualism and Puritan individualism. He also argued that the form addressed the interests and capacities of the new middle-class reading public and the new book trade evolving in response to them. As tradesmen themselves, Defoe and Richardson had only to 'consult their own standards' to know that their work would appeal to a large audience.

Dedication of Watt regarding novel were then followed by Williams, In *The Long Revolution* (1961), Williams developed pioneering accounts of the sociology of the book trade, the sociology of authorship and the sociology of the novel. In *The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence* (1970), he argued that the modern novel articulated a distinctively modern 'structure of feeling', the key problem of which was the 'knowable community'. In 1964 Goldmann published *Pour une Sociologie du Roman* translated by Alan Sheridan as *Towards a Sociology of the Novel* in 1974. Like Lukács, Goldmann sees the novel as revolving around the problematic hero's search for authentic values in a degraded society. But Goldmann also postulates a 'rigorous homology' between the literary form of the novel and the economic form of the commodity. The early novel, he argues, is concerned with individual biography and the problematic hero, but, as competitive capitalism evolves into monopoly capitalism, the problematic hero progressively disappears. The period between the First and Second World Wars witnesses a temporary experiment with the community as collective hero: Goldmann's example is *Malraux*. But the main line of development is characterised by the effort to write the novel of 'the absence of

subjects'. Here, Goldmann's example is the *nouveau roman* of Alain Robbe.

Building on earlier work in the production of culture, reception aesthetics and cultural capital, the sociology of literature has recently concentrated on readers' construction of meaning. New developments include studying the relationship between literature and group identities; concerning institutional and reader-response analysis; reintroducing the role of intentions of the author in literature; reconsidering the role of ethics and morality in literature and developing a clearer understanding of how literature is and is not like other media. Unsurprisingly, one who wants to be a good author must be equipped by the knowledge of sociology . the rise of the novel in terms of idea demands such a requirement.

In addition, the sociology of literature has also recently taken an interest in the global inequality between First-World and Third-World authors, where the latter tend to be strongly dependent on the editorial decisions of publishers in Paris, London or New York and are often excluded from participation in the global literary market.

III. Conclusion

Some Scholars of sociology had paid attention to Literary works. Their contributions inspired authors to produce the ideal works and enriched them. The appearances of novel which evoke social life became varied from cultural product, moral to aesthetic values. A novel is able to perform its own identity and show of how literature is not like other media.

References

Burns, Tom. eds, (1973) *Sociology of Literature and Drama*, Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Eagleton, Terry. (1976) *Criticism and Ideology*, London: New Left Books

Goldman, Lucien (1975) *Towards a Sociology of the Novel*. Alan Sheridan, London: Tavistock.

Laurenson, Diana T and Alan Swingewood, *The Sociology of Literature*, London: McGibbon and Kee

Mann, Peter H (1982) *From Author to Reader: A Social Study of Books*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Milner, Andrew. (1981) *John Milton and the English Revolution: A Study in the Sociology of Literature*, London: Macmillan.