

Society and History as the Sources of Creative Process of Authors of World Literature: An Intertextuality Perspective

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Abstract: Society and history are two important aspects the authors of great works of world literature have always adopted for their sources of inspirations. Society has been used to speak of their minds of the structure of power relation, and history has been used to illustrate the time and space where the issues take place imaginatively and creatively. In a creative process, an author may adopt some references to his society and history of his time and simultaneously bring them up into his creative works. The paper examines the creative process of some great authors of world literary works who have been influenced by their societies and histories in their works directly and indirectly. Intertextuality perspective will uncover the relations of these two ideas. The discussion shows that most of great authors of works of literature have been much indebted by the society's changing in their lifetimes, as well as the historical perspectives they have understood, in developing their themes and ideas of humans' life spheres. The conclusion approves that society and history are two important factors which shape the minds of the authors to generate new ideas and concepts of creative process in writing works of literature. Society and history are two significant sites where the authors will always look up to relate to their memory and sentimentality to speak of their minds of the world of existence.

Key word: *Society, History, Influence, Intertextuality, Relation of Power*

I. INTRODUCTION

Literature is one of the arts which re-creates, reproduce, and reconfigure the consciousness and the conscience of a period. It tells readers what happens to man and his being human, as well as his relationship with the world. It presents to people the society and history, nature and its structure, the patterns of one's faith and destiny, the goods and the bads, the misfortunes, the visions, the illusions, the ideas and thoughts, the viciousness, the humiliations, and many others. Literature probes into the mysteries. As an analogy, science possibly lifts men up to understand their surroundings and world, literature possibly brings men up to discern themselves. When science is able to make people understand what is the construction of nature, so does literature can make people aware of themselves within the pattern and the structure of their society.

Literature, by its very nature, cannot, in and of itself, solve social and political problems. Any solution to a social and or a political endeavor in a work of literature is a virtuously mental solution. It is because literature can only depict what has happened to man and his humanity, and then it is generated through generations and learned as a mirror of life. Although literature can also teach readers of human psychology. The studies on literature which confront society and history have been much indebted to the problems of historical and social problems. To mention a few, there are works of comparative studies which encounter literature with its problematic issues on social and historical connections, such as the works of D'Loughy (2001), Farrell (2002), Juvan (2008), Sickels (2010), Opreanu (2011), and Mangaraj (2012). Most of their studies contested society and history in their systemic relations and connections which possibly relate the works of literature in intertextuality perspective. However, they related only to what has been said as social and historical perspective to refer to the term influence. For more than centuries, writers of great works of literature had been using society and history as their stages to bring up their ideas and opinion to state what they have in minds about them. Society and history are two important aspects the authors of great works of world literature have always adopted for their sources of inspirations. The paper will explore the nature of the writers of great works of literature in shaping their ideas of the nature of society and history on their works.

II. INFLUENCE AND ORIGINALITY

The term intertextuality was firstly coined by Kristeva in reference to Bakhtin's "translinguistic" approach to text analysis as specifically linked to his theory of genre. Kristeva notes that intertextuality implies "the insertion of history (society) into a text and of this text into history" (Opreanu, 2011:95-110). Bakhtin points out to how text responds to other text and shapes or anticipates next texts. The texts of great works of literature, of course, give response to other texts they may be sharing each others' problems of humanity and social problems. In a creative process, eventually, an author may adopt some references to his society and

history of his time and simultaneously bring them up into his creative works.

Harold Bloom's *The Anxiety of Influence* (1973) explains the close relations between past and present literary texts. Bloom, one of the leading theorists of intertextuality, argues that every poet (literary writer(s) in general) "is engaged in an antagonistic struggle against his literary forebears" (Opreanu, 2011: 95-110). Bloom approves that there must be influences of the strong poets and their predecessors, and they took some advantages from their predecessors. In Bloom's ideas, every poet will rebel against his former writers in terms of ideas and subjectivity. This means that every poet (or writer in general) will always try to reconfigure what has been put forward by other poets who have produced similar ideas with him. The process of reconfiguring the former texts, as has been contented by Bloom, is through displacement and misreading. He said that, "Unfortunately, poems are not things but only words that refer to other words, and those words refer to still other words, and so on, into the densely overpopulated world of literary language. Any poem is an inter-poem, and any reading of a poem is an inter-reading. A poem is not writing, but rewriting" (Bloom in Juvan, 2008).

The term influence, which is originally derived from Bloom's idea, has the same effect as that of originality. Literature means something that is written for refreshing and inspiring the mind. It records the thoughts and feelings of great minds. It attracts in two ways—through its matter and through its manner. The matter must be such that those who read it are interested in some way. The manner must be such as will be pleasing to the reader and adds to his fund of knowledge. What can be called as refreshing is the case of originality. Something which comprises an original feature, will be refreshingly giving a new atmosphere to readers to be taken into consideration. Modern novelists, according to Bloom, are always anxious to the influence of other novelists rather than modern poets (Opreanu, 2011:95-110). This means that originality is a precious stone which the novelists and also poets are always looking for.

III. SOCIETY AND HISTORY

People live in a society. That is, there are relations and interrelation between men who live in the society. Naturally, if one has the power of language to express the feelings, he/she is well on the way to creating literature. In other words, the subject matter of literature is society in some form or other. Texts of literature is psychologically and culturally bound to society and history. Their relationship is closely tied. The relationship between them can be illustrated as follows:



Texts are not necessarily written. Any culturally produced object or social practice capable of symbolic interpretation and reinterpretation can be considered as a text. A text is of course the product of a society, in which a history may be used to become a stage to elevate a writer's ideas of a certain humanity problem upon a certain period. It means that a society has been used to be a metaphoric setting in which the problem is exposed to by a writer. Through his creativity, of course a writer is indebted in his/her society and people he/she might be using to tell a history.

Related to the above proposed views, from within a framework of postmodern social theory, an interest in writing and intertextuality rejects distinctions between "real" and representation (Stanley & Morgan, 1993:3). In Stanley & Morgan's views, all texts are fabrications and as such as subject to deconstructive re-writing and re-reading. The text is depicting or giving explanation of a problem, but is not representing. Social science texts, like any others, are to be read and re-read, not as representations of the social world, but as contested inventions to speak of "the truth" about the world, constituted in the play of disciplines of the social. According to this views, intertextuality is situated more firmly within the context of some poststructuralist and postmodern positions on knowledge, power and resistance.

Novelists and poets always have the place as their battlefields to express their creative ideas, that is society. After all, society is this bond of fellowship between man and man through communication that the poet or writer seeks. If literature expresses social sympathies, naturally it is bound to exercise some positive influence on people's minds and attitudes. Society reacts to literature in a living way. An inspiring poem creates general influence on society. Society, in a way to follow what has been suggested by Stanley and Morgan (1993:3) above, is used to speak of the writers' minds of the structure of society's knowledge, power relation, and resistance as well, and then history has been used to illustrate the time and space where the issues take place imaginatively and creatively.

Mary Shelley, a poet, has coined poets the misunderstood deputies of mankind. Their function is to give example of practical lesson of life that men may wish to follow. Poetry and other works of literature generally do this in a inaudible and inconspicuous way. Novels are recognized to have changed the paths of the human mind and set in indication movements which have transformed people's ways of life. The influence of literature on society is felt directly or indirectly. Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was directly responsible for a movement against slavery in literature and life in America in the past. The novels of Dickens, another case in England, had an indirect influence in forming in society a sentiment for regulating and eradicating social injuries, calling for necessary transformations. Sarat Chandra's novels, in India, have gone a long way in ruining conservatism as concerns women in society (Mangaraj, 2012).

It is, however, clear that if one is interested in literature, and its influence is bound to move him amply. Literature is comprising moral lessons of life. Understanding life is not only to experience the bright side of the life, but the dark side of it can be more promising (Mangaraj, 2012). Thus, society produces literature. It may be described as the spectator of the society. But the quality and nature of the reflection of the mirror depends upon the writer's attitude of mind, creativity and his response toward the transformation surrounds him. Naturally, conservative-minded writer will encounter the traditional way of life as his best deal of thinking. He will take concerns into some problems which are put in high standards in accordance with his way of thinking. On the other hand, a progressive writer will show his progressive way of thinking upon such things and gives response to it as repressing ideas, and hence he will be liberating new ideals and giving meaning to a new idea of life and change (Mangaraj, 2012).

For centuries, history and society have been accommodated into creative works by poets and novelists to speak off their minds. It is because, "History is the writers' time-bound materiality" (Gallager & Greenblatt, 2000:51). It is true because every writer tries to reflect the history to engage himself/herself into timely space world of human beings. It is because a history "...would cease to be a way of stabilizing texts; it would instead become part of (the writers') enigmatic being" (ibid). Social history in the early 21st century seems to be experiencing something of an identity crisis. This may seem surprising. During the second half of the 20th century it established a dominant position in research and an increasingly influential one in undergraduate teaching. Social history flourished on its eclecticism. Much more than did 'conventional' history writing, it assimilated both ideas and methodologies from other disciplines. This is in line with the idea of postmodern social studies. Otherwise, it is rephrased as interdisciplinary study.

IV. AUTHORSHIP

With respect to what has been said by Opreanu (2011:95-110) that "... every poet is engaged in antagonistic struggle against his literary forebears", it is understood that every text is trying to invent its originality. The originality is as the same as that of Derrida's term of *undecidability* [it literally means as "cannot be stated or defined precisely" because it has already become the smallest part of the trifles]. The term is referred to Derrida's meaning of *differance*. When trying to to represent the real, one finds that the meaning which one is trying to communicate slips from one's grasp. However, much one tries to make something "more real", it is always already deferred and irrecoverable (Derrida, 1976:65; Finlay, 1989). There is no "new" in this world. Every single thing has been written, re-written, read, re-read, created, re-created, produced, reproduced, fabricated, re-fabricated on and on until they could not be explained and re-explained as an "...*unending combinations of differance*" (Fox, 1995).

The novelists and poets always go to anticipate what has been put forward by their forebears, try to deny what has been found out before, and claim that what they have now is new and original. This is what Derrida has claimed as *logocentrism*. The theory of *differance* supplies the basis from which Derrida criticizes *logocentrism*. Derrida argues (1976) that claims to be able to achieve the *logos*, an *unmediated* knowledge of the world, are a feature of every discourse which seeks to explain the world, be it philosophical, religious, or scientific. In modern period, social and human sciences have gained legitimacy (although not incontestably) for their particular claims to knowledge of reality. But this logocentrism on the part of social science works only by a denial (or bracketing) of other competing claims. A people's idea of reality, history, and even self-worth are all impacted by the books they read.

In a sense of what Derrida has condensed in his discussion of *differance*, the writers of works of literature seemed to pay more attention on the 'wholeness' and 'totalism' (Derrida's claims) or the 'truism' (as Farrell (2002) has coined). What has been said as being antagonistic toward a former writer is nonetheless true. The battle ground of the writers is of course works of literature. Therefore, they search for originality value of their works to claims themselves as different. Otherwise, the writers have othered themselves for being different from the convention. In this views, with respect to Derrida's claim, every writer wants to put him/herself in 'different' position. Once again, there is a sense of otherness in Derrida's conception.

A famous African writer, Chinua Achebe, really wanted his own story about Africa to give explanation of the complexity and sophistication of African society before the arrival of Europeans and to depict the deep

wounds of colonialism had wreaked on the country's social, cultural, and political institution. Although today the majority of critics consider Achebe to be the founding father of the modern African novel, Achebe was far from the first African to publish a novel. Before *Things Fall Apart*, the best-known African novel was *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* by Amos Tutuola, who was also Nigerian. Published by the prestigious Faber and Faber in London in 1952, the novel was applauded in the West; however, some African scholars were suspicious of it, fearing that Tutuola had used pidgin English and his reveal of a drunk would picture out Nigerians in a bad impression (Sickles, 2010). Chinua Achebe has put himself in different stage to his most professional career in writing. Most of his works are depicting Nigerian society and history, their conversion from its primitive into modern civilization, led by Europeans' misfortune colonization. His sentimentality of the past reveals his claims of wholeness of meaning of modernization.

In the history of ideology, as has been considered going side by side with the history of literature, the word *decadence* was also a reaction against naturalism. In literary history, the term *decadence* specifically applies to a late nineteenth century movement marked by supposedly amoral sentiments, extensive use of sensual or exotic imagery, and aestheticism. A number of the principles of *decadence* are reflected in Oscar Wilde's famous novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891). Aestheticism was preserved in certain way by the group of writers which are associated with the Rhymers' Club and the publications of *The Yellow Book* (1894-97) among them Wilde, Arthur Symons and Ernest Dowson, and also the publication of drawings by Beardsley. They are the people who were always recognized as the most wanted people at the turn of the century. The word *fin de siècle* in art and literature is referred to primarily to the movements of *decadence* and aestheticism (Nestvold, 2001).

Literary works attempt to encourage particular spirits, ideas, values, or ideologies, and other features. Besides, it gives its best facets in terms of its nature and ingredients. Literature is of course a product of a society in a particular time and space, places within the structures and levels of societies. Not surprisingly, the ideas and values which literary works seek to endorse are predisposed by the history, culture and situations which significant to the people who wrote them.

Rather than a disinterested or idealistic endeavor, literature is a very worldly and very practical sort of activity aimed at the promotion and dissemination of cultural values and views of the world which are tightly connected to the interests of the author and of the dominant and other powers in her/his society. It should be noted of course that the relation of the author to the powers, institutions, and systems of belief of his/her time can be one of affinity, opposition, or even ambiguity. For these reasons, an understanding of literature and of particular literary texts depends not only on the isolated reading of certain individual works and the consideration of their authors' lives and their circumstances but also upon a solid knowledge and critical examination of the human history, language, and culture (including art, music, philosophy, religion, science, politics, etc.) of which literature forms part and which it represents.

The study of literature is therefore an eminently interdisciplinary endeavor through which people attempt to make sense of the human experience throughout history and of the ways in which human beings depict that experience and finally come to an understanding of themselves and of the world around them. It is a *truism* [Derrida coined the term 'totality' or 'wholeness' (Fox, 1995) to explain that the crucial thing to search up in a literary works is not in its formal ideology. It is its *truism* which matters the most (Farrel, 2002).

Many people know Tolstoy for his greatness in literary circle. He was a great writer, thinker, a genius in his field. People read his works is not because of the ideological and or political states Tolstoy wanted to formulate. *Anna Karenina* pictures out the character Levin who develops his character during the progress of the novel. In that it can be proposed the origin of 'political non-resistance' which developed into a part which was considered as the idealism of Tolstoyism. Levin has invented his own ways to refuse to take a part in public undertakings, and the ways were Tolstoy's own invention for configuring this dogma (Farrel, 2002).

In *War and Peace* Tolstoy depicts a vision of history which prospers in deconstructing it to the point that it is impossible,"... to distinguish between influences that are essential and of weight in the influencing of events and those which are incidental or secondary" (Farrell, 2002). According to this commencement of history, every single human being in a time influences the history of that period. In this views, a history is the manifestation of all the engagements and all the opinions of every single human being. However, this is a true sense. The history of man is everything which comes and happens to man.

V. CONCLUSION

Society is an institution which comprises race, ethnicity, gender, sex, political, etc, in which the writers will always (do whatever they want to do depends on their tone(s) and voice(s)) appreciate, look down upon, criticize, shape, reproduce, deconstruct, etc. History, on the other hand, is time and space where the writers will always look back and make use of them as the analogy and comparison. Most of authors of great works of literature perpetuate their ideas of history and society and step on them to bring up their ideas of power and control over certain societies and histories of all time. They know, of course, that society and history are two

different sites which can be put side by side simultaneously. They cannot be contested because history is the result of man's dwelling mental problems, and a man is a part of society.

History and society are two different entities the writers will always look up to when speaking of their minds of human being existence. History and society are regarded as the sources of the writers' creative process in producing, reproducing, creating, re-creating, configure, re-configuring the consciousness and consciences of man and humanity in their works of literature. However, what always haunt the minds of writers in writing is their fear of originality and influence of other writers before them. Their denial mechanisms lead them to think of their society and history to grasp the sense of wholeness, the totalism of their proposed meaning, and the truism of what has been said as a sense of humanity.

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