

September 2014

The Sociology of Texts and the Institutionalisation of Literary Languages

Zima Peter·V.

Follow this and additional works at: <https://tsla.researchcommons.org/journal>



Part of the [Chinese Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Peter·V., Zima. 2014. "The Sociology of Texts and the Institutionalisation of Literary Languages." *Theoretical Studies in Literature and Art* 34, (5): pp.108-118. <https://tsla.researchcommons.org/journal/vol34/iss5/23>

This Research Article is brought to you for free and open access by Theoretical Studies in Literature and Art. It has been accepted for inclusion by an authorized editor of Theoretical Studies in Literature and Art.

文本社会学和文学语言的体制化

彼特·V. 齐马

摘要:本文分三部分。第一部分基于俄国形式主义者的一个基本洞见,即文学文本通过语言和社会相联系,此洞见不见于传统的文学社会学。第二部分将文学文本定义为一种普遍性的语言实验,但同时又是特定历史时刻的社会模式。第三部分处理的问题是,作家或作家群如何通过文学宣言、集体性作品和实验文本实现各种文学语言的体制化。基本目的是要显示,一种文本社会学如何将“社会语言情境”、“社会方言”和“互文性”等关键概念和“体制”观念相结合。文学文本可以被建构为一种特别的社会语言情境模式,它也向往着体制化:它自称为新的或合法的文本,是值得效仿的普遍性的语言实验。

关键词:话语; 互文性; 体制; 社会语言情境; 社会方言

作者简介:彼特·V. 齐马是克拉根福大学总体文学和比较文学荣休教授,奥地利科学院通讯院士,欧洲科学院院士。电子邮箱:Peter. Zima@ aau. at

Title: The Sociology of Texts and the Institutionalisation of Literary Languages

Abstract: This paper is divided into three parts. The first part is based on one of the basic insights of the Russian Formalists, namely that the literary text is linked to society by language, an insight that is absent from traditional sociologies of literature. The second part defines the literary text as a universal linguistic experiment that is at the same time a model of society at a particular historical moment. The third part deals with the question how literary languages are institutionalised by individual writers or groups of writers in manifestos, collective works and experimental texts. The basic aim is to show how a sociology of texts combines the key concepts of *socio-linguistic situation*, *sociolect* and *intertextuality* with the notion of *institution*. The literary text, which can be construed as a model of a particular socio-linguistic situation, aspires towards institutionalisation: it pretends to be the new or legitimate text and a universal experiment with language worth imitating.

Key words: discourse; intertextuality; institution; socio-linguistic situation; sociolect

Author: **Peter V. Zima** is professor emeritus of General and Comparative Literature at Klagenfurt University, corresponding member of the Austrian Academy of Sciences, member of Academia Europaea. Email: Peter. Zima@ aau. at

I. The Sociology of Texts: Socio-Linguistic Situations, Sociolects and Discourses

In spite of their mimetic aspects and their referential character, which nobody will want to ignore, literary and non-literary texts do not simply represent, reflect or depict the real world in a more or less accurate way; they are attempts to construct or reconstruct reality as a whole or some of its segments or elements. These constructive or reconstructive attempts tend to assume a dialogical and polemical character because each literary, ideological or theoretical text, far from operating as an isolated monad, is a reaction to other texts,

their subjects and their positions or axiologies.

This idea was first introduced into literary theory by Mikhail M. Bakhtin who believes that the novel in particular ought to be seen as an open dialogue with other texts which are overtly or covertly quoted in approval, criticised, parodied or rejected. Bakhtin's position is summarised by Julia Kristeva who explains: "Bakhtin locates the text in history and society both of which he considers as texts which the writer reads and re-enacts by rewriting them" (144). Kristeva calls this dialogical process imagined by Bakhtin *intertextuality*, and I propose to link text and society by envisaging literary and non-literary texts as intertextual constructions. It goes without saying that consensual, critical or polemical reactions to texts are at the same time reactions to social positions and group interests.

This additional idea is confirmed by the British linguist M. A. K. Halliday and some of his disciples. Reformulating the basic ideas of Halliday's sociolinguistic theory, Gunther Kress and Robert Hodge for example remind us of the ongoing linguistic conflicts which break out whenever one group tries to impose its classifications and definitions (its discursive practices) on other groups, thus challenging their lexical, semantic and narrative potentials: "In this way classification becomes the site of tension and struggle — on one level between individuals, as each tries to impose his or her system on others or gives way to superior power. On another level, the struggle goes on between social, ethnic, national, or racial groupings" (63-64).

This means that, by reacting to existing classifications and definitions, authors and their texts take sides, thereby becoming involved in classification struggles. "Tell me how you classify and I'll tell you who you are" (179), says Roland Barthes. It is always the ideological, political point of view that determines classifications and definitions by individuals and groups. Take a country like Switzerland, for example: Is there such a thing as a Swiss national literature — or do we have to say that four different national literatures (French, German, Italian, Romance) coexist on Swiss soil? Is there, was there ever such a thing as a Yugoslav literature — or do we have to assume that, even in the past, several national literatures — Croatian, Bosnian, Serbian, Slovene, etc. — coexisted within the former Yugoslav state? Does a language called Serbo-Croatian exist — or are we dealing with two different (albeit closely related) languages? In other words, classifications and definitions have invariably a social, political dimension to them.

I.1. Socio-linguistic situations

Translated into literary terms, this can be taken to mean that for example avant-garde groups of artists, such as the Vorticists, the Italian Futurists or the French Surrealists, invent a new vocabulary, introduce new distinctions and classifications (e.g. the opposition between the conscious and the unconscious) and announce a break with the established patterns of literary discourse. Their programmes, far from being purely destructive — as some Dadaist or Futurist manifestos might suggest — aim at creating a new language situated beyond romanticism, realism and the bourgeois order.

At present, the expression "bourgeois order", which the Futurists, Surrealists and Vorticists thundered against, sounds as dated as most avant-garde languages so fashionable in the nineteen twenties and thirties. Why is this so? What makes these languages sound historical or even pathetic or false? The fact, I would suggest, that we have moved into a different socio-linguistic situation in which the critique of romanticism, realism and the bourgeoisie has been replaced by postmodern invectives against the elitist language of modernism and feminist critiques of male domination and sexism.

Xavière Gauthier's book on *Surrealism and Sexuality* (*Surréalisme et sexualité*) which came out in 1970 has a symptomatic value inasmuch as it epitomises the linguistic turn involved, i.e. the gradual transition from one linguistic situation to another. From a feminist point of view, the revolutionary jargon of the surrealist

group (Aragon, Breton, Eluard) is not less sexist than other male jargons of the late modern or modernist period. Considered within a new socio-linguistic situation and from a feminist point of view that is based on relevance and classification criteria such as *sexist/non-sexist*, French Surrealism is turned by Xavière Gauthier into a new object, a new construction within a postmodern context marked by new languages.

I.2. Sociolect and Discourse

Naturally, Gauthier's relevance criterion *sexist/non-sexist* is not an individual or purely contingent matter; for it is part and parcel of an emerging group language, of feminism, which tries to impose new semantic criteria, classifications and definitions. I have called this group language *sociolect* and suggested that a particular socio-linguistic situation (the modernist situation between the wars or the postmodern situation after the Second World War) could be considered as a complex interaction of groups and their literary, ideological, religious or scientific sociolects.

It goes without saying that sociolects in the surrealist, psychoanalytic, feminist or Marxist sense do not exist as such, but only in particular discursive forms, realised by individual speakers or groups of speakers in particular situations. In other words: the sociolect is merely an *ideal type* in Max Weber's sense (very much like Saussure's *langue*) and does not ever appear independently of its discursive manifestations. We can never speak the "totality" of a Marxist or feminist sociolect; we can only realise some of its lexical, semantic and narrative potentials by turning it into a discourse. In the discourse, defined as a semantic and narrative structure, individual and collective interests are being articulated and bring about semantic shifts and new narrative forms which decisively contribute to the change of the sociolect and to the global transformation of the socio-linguistic situation. This concept of a dynamic and historicised language system was anticipated by Bakhtin who pointed out: "Language is always languages: it is defined by multi-speechedness" (412).

Unlike Saussure's "langue", Foucault's "episteme" and Kuhn's "paradigm", all of which are defined as *closed systems* excluding historicity and alterity (Kuhn's paradigm excludes everything that does not conform to its logic), the *socio-linguistic situation* is defined as an *open space*: open towards the past and the future. This should be taken to mean that languages of the past coexist with languages of the present and new forms of discourse which announce the future. Whenever we open a literary or scientific book we almost unwittingly date it by relating the different types of discourse it reproduces and deals with to our own (i. e. the present, contemporary) socio-linguistic situation. From the point of view adopted here, the latter thus appears as an open and dynamic historical structure whose transformation is mainly due to permanently colliding social and linguistic interests (cf. Zima, 2000). Unlike a paradigm which disintegrates because inexplicable phenomena cause the break-up of its logic, the socio-linguistic situation is in permanent flux: its changes are the changes of society and culture themselves.

This means that a culture or a "cultural text" in the sense of Yuri Lotman (cf. Lotman, 1977) can also be represented or rather constructed as a socio-linguistic situation which differs from country to country, from region to region. Insofar as very different political, literary, philosophical and journalistic traditions interact, European socio-linguistic situations differ substantially from those in China, Japan or the United States.

Reformulating Kristeva's notion of intertextuality, one could argue that virtually all literary and non-literary (journalistic, political, scientific) texts could be read as metonymic representations of a particular socio-linguistic situation. Naturally, the latter is never presented as a whole; it is certainly not presented as a coherent whole. But it is a well-known fact that, very much like journalistic texts, economic, sociological, literary and even linguistic texts differ substantially from culture to culture. Intertextuality as dialogical interaction of texts thus appears as an historically and culturally variable phenomenon which changes along with

the socio-linguistic situation.

II. The Literary Text as a Universal Model: Intertextuality

Considering critically what has been said so far, one might wonder what exactly the sociology of texts has to do with literature and literary criticism which, in the English-speaking world, tends to be defined as an “essayistic discourse about literature”. Adopting a more sociological or semiotic point of view, one might also wonder whether this kind of approach could not altogether dispense with the literary work. Are other (e. g. journalistic) texts not more important than literature? What is the point of focusing on the literary text in a society in which it has become quite marginal? (cf. Todorov, 2007).

II.1. Coseriu: The Literary Text as a Universal Experiment

The answer is that the literary text has a special status because, far from being a particular form of language, as Roman Jakobson would have it (Cf. Jakobson, 1981), it ought to be viewed as the most universal type of text. Eugenio Coseriu argues against Jakobson’s well-known definition of the poetic function, which makes the latter appear as a specific mode of linguistic communication, that poetry and literature are in fact *the most general forms of language use*. “Literary texts”, he argues, “have to be accepted as models of text linguistics insofar as, from a functional point of view, they constitute the richest species of texts” (184). He also refers to them as “universal experiments with language” (186).

Translated into sociological and sociosemiotic terminology, this means that a literary text can be read as the richest and most compact model of a particular socio-linguistic situation and its intertextuality. For unlike philosophical scientific, religious or legal texts, it is an intertextual experiment open to all kinds of sociolects and discourses which can be imitated, parodied, summarised, criticised, transformed or even quoted literally. The possibilities of philosophical and especially scientific or legal texts are far more restricted, although they are not always limited to quotation and criticism as journalistic prose and political speeches show. In this respect, however, the freedom of modern literature is well-nigh unlimited: it can transform daily communication into a Dadaistic collage by breaking up lexical, semantic and syntactic units. It can absorb all other discourses — from the musical and the chemical to the religious — without being absorbed by them.

II.2. “A Clockwork Orange”

From a sociological point of view, literature appears as a particularly representative metonymic or synecdochal representation of socio-linguistic situations. It includes and transforms — at least potentially — all other types of discourse, thereby articulating the conflicting ideological, political and philosophical interests and points of view which constitute a social formation. Let me illustrate these considerations by a brief analysis. In 1962, Anthony Burgess published his well-known and possibly prophetic novel *A Clockwork Orange* which isolates an important segment of the socio-linguistic situation of the British and European sixties: a situation marked by the main sociolects of the welfare state (liberal, socialist, conservative, humanist) and by the oppositional secret language of a violent peer group or a gang of hooligans who terrorise their neighbourhood. In the present situation, the oppositional sociolect of the gang sounds dated because it relies heavily on Russian vocabulary, i. e. on a language which in the sixties was considered by many as a revolutionary alternative to “Western civilisation.”

The following passage from *A Clockwork Orange* shows to what extent the oppositional discourse of the narrator relies on this language which is inextricably linked to Beethoven’s music and in particular to his *Ninth*

Symphony. The narrator, leader of the violent gang, recounts a dream in one of the many prison cells he was confined to: “But it was not really like sleep, it was like passing out to another better world. And in this other better world, O my brothers, I was like a big field with all flowers and trees, and there was like a goat with a man’s litso playing away on a like flute. An then there rose like the sun Ludwig van himself with thundery litso and cravat and wild windy voloss, and then I heard the Ninth, last movement, with the slovos all a bit mixed up like they knew themselves they had to be mixed up, this being a dream”(59).

This passage reveals the prophetic nature of the novel which, in 1962, anticipates the most important aspects of the 1968 revolts: the idea of overcoming the bourgeois-capitalist order, the idea of a “better world,” the idea of an unadulterated, non-ideological language and finally, the revolutionary and utopian vision of art.

As far as the gang’s sociolect goes, this dissident, community-oriented language appears in a different light when viewed from the point of view of the establishment and its institutions. It turns into slang: “‘Odd bits of old rhyming slang’, said Dr. Branom, who did not look quite so much like a friend any more. ‘A bit of gipsy talk too. But most of the roots are Slav. Propaganda. Subliminal penetration’”(91). In our situation, Dr. Branom’s official language appears as equally dated: it is the language of the Cold War, of anti-Soviet ideology.

The result of this inevitably sketchy analysis is the insight that literature is neither a representation of “reality” nor the expression of an ideology or world view. It is rather an attempt at experimental linguistic reconstruction: Burgess opposes a fictive rebel language (called *nadsat*) to the ideological languages of the sixties in order to show how, at the end of the day, the social, linguistic and aesthetic revolt of the gang is integrated by physical and psychic manipulation into the existing power structures. In this respect, he also anticipates the domestication of the 1968 revolts. However, he does not express an identifiable ideology; his novel remains a polysemic social and linguistic experiment involving some of the most important collective languages of the sixties.

The most prominent of these is *nadsat*, a fictive mixture of English adolescent slang and anglicised Russian words. Its semantic and narrative importance is due to the fact that it establishes a narrative community between Alex, the first person narrator, and his friends or *droogs*. As fictive listeners or readers (“O my brothers”, Alex keeps repeating) they are the first recipients of a narrative in their own language, the language of a rebel peer group.

Insofar as not only *nadsat* but most discourses interacting in the novel revolve around the ideas of revolt, overcoming, a “better world” and integration into the established order, the novel can be sociologically dated as being *late modern* or *modernist*. For in postmodern novels all of these utopian aspirations have been eclipsed by indifference towards an alternative social order. On the whole, one could conclude with Adorno that a literary work is at the same time autonomous (i. e. ambiguous, non-conceptual) and a social fact, a *fait social* in the sense of Durkheim and Mauss (cf. Adorno, 1999:10-13 and Karsenti, 1994).

II. 3. Literary Texts as Intertextual Models of Society

Traditional sociology of literature was not only in trouble because, more often than not, it reduced the text to a univocal ideological or philosophical system, but also because of its inability to account for the specific character of texts. If, for example, T. S. Eliot, Valéry and Proust were all bourgeois authors in the Marxist sense, why didn’t they adopt the same or at least similar stylistic devices? — The sociology of texts would answer: because Proust’s novel at any rate is structured as a protracted critique of aristocratic conversation which eventually yields the alternative of writing, of *écriture* (cf. Zima, 2002:71-120). The same cannot possibly be said of T. S. Eliot’s or Valéry’s works.

Let us have a closer look at the works of Proust, Oscar Wilde and James Joyce. Proust's novel *A la recherche du temps perdu* (*Remembrance of Things Past*) can be read as a long search for the authentic values system based on the authentic difference. In a critique of the Paris leisure class (a symbiosis of the bourgeoisie and the nobility based in the Faubourg Saint-Germain) and its sociolect, the conversation or "witty talk" cultivated by aristocrats and bourgeois alike, the narrator wonders where this difference might be. He realises quite soon that he will not find this qualitative difference within the conversation of the *société des salons* which is indifferent to social values. Within this sociolect, all values appear as exchangeable because the only thing that matters is the rhetorical success of the speaker, the *Causeur*. Finally, the author ends the search when he makes his narrator proclaim that the conversation of the leisure class and the spoken word in general are nil and void and that *Literature* is the only true reality and the real goal of life: "Real life at last laid bare and illuminated [...]" (240).

What matters in the present context is the fact that Proust's novel is a long critique of leisure class conversation which yields the semantic opposition — the qualitative difference — on which the entire novel is based: *the difference between the spoken and the written word*, between *parole* and *écriture*. In other words, the critique of the sociolect of the leisure class is the intertextual process responsible for the structuration of the long novel. This novel is not structured by actions and events but by a kind of *philosophical reflection* upon society and its languages. Tzvetan Todorov would say that it obeys a philosophical causality, not a causality geared towards events (*causalité événementielle*) (cf. Todorov, 1968).

The social and linguistic situation is similar in the case of Oscar Wilde whose drama — especially *The Importance of Being Earnest* — absorbs the "witty talk" of the London leisure class. Although Wilde, like Proust, adopts a critical attitude towards conversation as "witty talk", he does not aim at outright condemnation, nor does he oppose literary writing to the spoken word. His solution is quite different: he turns "witty talk" into the topic and the material of his plays.

The consequences for the structure of these plays are quite substantial. Unlike traditional comedies which are structured by action and events geared towards a *dénouement*, Wilde's plays are all talk and no action. What is also missing is a genuine dialogue *linked* to action and event. Commenting on the conversation drama, Peter Szondi writes: "By hovering between people instead of linking them, conversation becomes irrelevant. [...] It has no subjective origin and no objective goal: it does not lead anywhere, does not turn into action" (88).

This concise description of "conversation drama" is applicable to *The Importance of Being Earnest*: a play in which action and dialogue are replaced by conversation. What Wilde writes about his novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, namely that it is "all conversation and no action [...]. My people sit in chairs and chatter" (154), is equally valid for his plays: they too, are "all conversation and no action".

They all reveal to what extent the sociolect and its discourses contribute to the structuration of a literary genre. As an intertextual experiment, Wilde's drama absorbs the conversation of the British leisure class, transforms and adapts it stylistically, but is in turn formed and structured by it. It loses a dramatic causality based on actions and events and is thus turned into a new genre: *conversation drama*.

The social and linguistic situation is quite different in the case of James Joyce's novel *Ulysses*. The latter is a universal linguistic experiment in the sense of Coseriu. It absorbs virtually all languages that were available, at the turn of the century, in Joyce's Dublin and in Europe at large. It is an intertextual experiment without utopian perspectives (in this respect it differs substantially from Proust's *Recherche*). Certain dialogues between the two main protagonists — Stephen and Bloom — sound like mixtures of essay and protocol: "Were their views in some points divergent? — Stephen dissented openly from Bloom's views on the importance of

dietary and civic self-help while Bloom dissented tacitly from Stephen's views on the eternal affirmation of the spirit of man in literature." Joyce's textual collages, composed of historical fragments, advertisements and notes ("Little Harry Hughes..."), are reminiscent of the postmodern textual experiments published by Maurice Roche in France and Jürgen Becker in Germany in the 1960s and 70s. Joyce's text even absorbs discourses of the advertising industry, e. g. a text that praises suppositories in the highest terms: "Quote the textual terms in which the prospectus claimed advantages for this thaumaturgic remedy. It heals and soothes while you sleep, in case of trouble in breaking wind, assists nature in the most formidable way [...]" (643).

Like Proust's novel, *Ulysses* is a textual experiment and a reflection upon the evolution of consciousness rather than an action novel. As an intertextual attempt to absorb essential elements of its socio-linguistic context, it is a novel based on philosophical rather than on event causality. Like Wilde's plays and his novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, it is formed by the languages it absorbs and by its intertextuality in general. It is a universal experiment with language in the sense of Coseriu.

III. The Institutionalisation of Literary Languages

In the last part of my analysis, I should like to show that literary texts are not only intertextual reactions to their social contexts but can also be viewed as attempts by authors to have their language and style recognised by the reading public: to have them *institutionalised*. To begin with, a few remarks on the concept of institution in the sociology of art and literature may be helpful.

Naturally, the institutionalisation of art and literature is not a new topic but a matter that was dealt with in the past within the framework of Niklas Luhmann's systems theory and by Pierre Bourdieu in his theory of the *artistic field* (*champ artistique*). More specific theories addressing problems of literature and its institutionalisation have been developed by Renée Balibar in France, Jacques Dubois in Belgium and Peter Bürger in Germany. The works of these authors have certainly contributed to a better understanding of those processes which lead to the institutional recognition of artistic and literary forms.

However, we are still far from having solved the most pressing problems related to the institutionalisation of *literary languages*. The reason for this gap in literary sociology is due to the fact that Luhmann and Bourdieu do not use the *concept of institution*, while the other theoreticians (Balibar, Dubois and Bürger) do not deal with the institutionalisation of literary languages, i. e. with the attempts of authors or groups of authors to have their ways of writing recognised on an institutional level.

One looks in vain for the word "institution" in Luhmann's theory of social systems. It occurs only once in *Die Gesellschaft der Gesellschaft* (Engl. transl.: *Theory of Society*), but is completely absent from his major work that is particularly relevant to us: from *Die Kunst der Gesellschaft* (*The Art of Society*). We may therefore conclude that Luhmann does not use the concept of "institution" — which is surprising because this concept is closely linked to that of "system."

Virtually the same can be said of Pierre Bourdieu whose theory of "fields" ("champs") deals with processes of institutionalisation in art, science and politics without ever introducing the concept of institution. His most important book on art, *The Rules of Art*, is based on the notion of field which is never related to the complementary notion of institution. The reader may wonder whether different forms of art such as music, literature, painting and cinema are all institutionalised in the same way and according to the same social norms and values.

In his book on Bourdieu, Richard Jenkins quite rightly insists on this gap in Bourdieu's theory: "[...] One does not find anything substantial if one looks for a theoretical model of institutions [...]." Referring to

Bourdieu, he adds: “He hardly ever mentions the institutional character of the fields” (89-90). This critique could also be addressed to Luhmann whose systems also owe their existence to specific processes of institutionalisation. Like Bourdieu, Luhmann only deals with *art in general* without taking into account the institutional differences between forms of art and their aesthetics.

Peter Bürger’s approach is more specific than Luhmann’s or Bourdieu’s because he does apply the concept of institution to literature, although he also speaks of “art as institution” (cf. Bürger, 1977). In an article on Stendhal, for example, he shows how the French writer tried to have the novel as genre recognised by the French reading public in the first half of the 19th century. Although Bürger uses the concept of genre, he does not really raise the question of literary languages and their institutional status. Moreover, he does not bother to define the concept of “institution” in a sociological context.

This is why, in a first step, it seems necessary to propose a viable concept of institution that could be applied to art and literature: “social mechanism which prescribes in a durable way ‘what has to be done’” (Schäfers 136-37). This very general definition has to be reformulated in order to make it applicable to the literary text: *social mechanism prescribing what has to be said and written in a particular social and linguistic situation*. We have now established a link between the sociology of texts and the concept of institution. What matters in this perspective is the *institutionalisation of new literary sociolects* and the corresponding aesthetics. Let me also underline the normative character of the institution: in the case of literature, it prescribes the aesthetic norm (in the sense of Czech Structuralism) which is relevant to the assessment of a work’s value.

III. 1. Marinetti and the Futurist Manifesto

The question what is to be said and written in a particular social and linguistic situation is answered by the Italian Futurist poet Filippo Tommaso Marinetti in a vast number of manifestos. It is *the form of the manifesto*, a polemical and programmatic text, which can be seen both as an attempt at subversion and at institutionalisation. Marinetti intends to break with a classical and romantic past, which he considers as sterile, and to map out a new literary language that suits his social utopia geared towards science and technology.

Marinetti’s manifestos are too well known to be quoted in detail here. I should like to draw your attention to their linguistic aspects: their lexical, semantic and syntactic innovations.

The lexical and semantic innovation is due to the discovery of a new reality: the industrial and technological reality of the early 20th century which gives birth to a number of unusual, aggressive and violent metaphors: “We shall sing the great masses agitated by work, pleasure and revolt; the multi-coloured and polyphonic rose windows of revolutions in the modern capitals; the nocturnal vibration of the arsenals and workshops illuminated by violent electric moons [...]” (“Fondazione” 28). Especially the metaphor “electric moons” for lamps is characteristic of the new futurist language.

However, the most important feature is the *form of the manifesto* which evokes the famous manifestos of the past, especially the *Communist Manifesto* of Marx and Engels. With its new metaphors and metonymies, the manifesto of the futurist avant-garde is at the same time an aggressive plea for the new literary style dominated by a technical, pseudo-scientific and bellicose vocabulary. The attempt to institutionalise a new style tends to become more concrete and more polemical from manifesto to manifesto.

The “Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature”, published in 1912 in Milan, is a radical critique of traditional literary language and announces at the same time new linguistic and aesthetic norms: “Let us destroy syntax by ordering substantives according to chance as they crop up.” [...] “Let us abolish the adjective [...]” “Let us abolish the adverb [...]” “Let’s do away with punctuation” (“Manifesto” 34-35).

In another well-known text, Marinetti proclaims: “Uccidiamo il chiaro di luna!” (“Uccidiamo” 29) — “Let us kill the moonshine!” This is clearly an attack on the central metaphor of European Romanticism.

What matters most to Marinetti and his followers, in spite of all their destructive rhetoric, is to have their new futuristic language recognised and institutionalised as the new literary style that marks a break with all established ways of writing.

III. 2. The Nouveau Roman: Robbe-Grillet, Sollers and “Tel Quel”

The manifesto is only one of many ways to have a new literary language and its aesthetic recognised by the institutions: by publishers, critics, reviews and universities. Marinetti had other instruments at his disposal: the journal *Poesia* whose director he was and the famous *Italia futurista*. A similar situation emerges in France in the 1960s when a group of writers — Jean-Louis Baudry, Jean-Joseph Goux, Jean-Louis Houdebine, Julia Kristeva and Philippe Sollers — gather around the neo-avant-garde journal *Tel Quel* in order to proclaim a new way of writing and a new aesthetic. At the same time they found a new book series at the Editions du Seuil — also called *Tel Quel*.

Thanks to Alain Robbe-Grillet, whose avant-garde novels are published at the Editions de Minuit and soon become a source of inspiration for the entire *Tel-Quel*-Group, the institutionalisation of a new way of writing begins. The main features of this writing are: the renunciation of anthropomorphisms, the elimination of implicit or explicit value judgements and a rigorous object-orientation from which human feelings are absent. The collective volume *Théorie d'ensemble* published by the Editions du Seuil in 1968 functioned as a kind of theoretical and poetic manifesto.

In his contribution to this volume, Michel Foucault insists on the importance of Robbe-Grillet's work for the *Tel-Quel*-group as a whole and on his role as mediator between the two avant-garde publishers: the Editions de Minuit and the Editions du Seuil. Foucault observes: “The importance of Robbe-Grillet is due to the question with which his work confronts every other work of its time. It is a critical question concerning the possibilities of language [...]” (11). These possibilities are limited because, as Mallarmé knew, an ever growing part of language has become useless for literature as it is contaminated with commercial and political clichés. This is obviously one reason why Robbe-Grillet decides to exclude anthropomorphic metaphors from his texts.

Foucault lists three aspects of institutionalisation aimed at by the new style of Robbe-Grillet and his friends in the *Tel-Quel*-group: 1. the presence of a dominant figure that initiates major aesthetic and linguistic changes (this figure is obviously Robbe-Grillet); 2. the relationship — so important in Italian Futurism — between stylistic innovation and a new category of objects that are becoming relevant to literature; 3. the institutionalisation of this innovation by an influential journal anchored in an important publisher (this publisher is Editions du Seuil).

Another important aspect of the institutionalisation of the Nouveau Roman is clearly Robbe-Grillet's manifesto-like book *Pour un nouveau roman* (*For a New Novel*), in which the author criticises the anthropomorphic, humanist and metaphysical tendencies of existentialist writers (especially Sartre and Camus). He focuses on the humanist complicity between man and world in existentialist writing and objects: “The world is neither significant nor absurd. It simply is” (21). With this sentence he obviously refers to Camus's work in which the notion of “absurdity” is central.

However, the changes suggested by Robbe-Grillet are more radical and far-reaching. He asks writers, his contemporaries, to eliminate anthropomorphic metaphors such as “montagne majestueuse” (“majestic mountain”) and “soleil impitoyable” (“pitiless sun”). Such metaphors, he believes, insinuate that a

complicity exists between us and the world: but this complicity is a humanist illusion.

Unlike the Futurist and Surrealist avant-gardes, which opposed the discredited discourses of classical, romantic and realist literature, the writers of *Tel Quel* represented a neo-avant-garde inspired by Marxism-Leninism, semiotics, deconstruction, Freudian (Lacanian) psychoanalysis and — at a certain moment — Chinese Maoism. The new sociolect is thus a product of the French and European socio-linguistic situation of the 1960s and 70s.

Let us listen to what Philippe Sollers has to say in an interview published in 1973: “There is not a single avant-garde writer who is not involved in the Chinese revolution. It is a revolution of language, a new contemporary practice” (qtd. in Charvet 35-36). The new project of the 1970s thus consists in a synthesis of the Maoist cultural revolution, semiotics and psychoanalysis. Like the historical avant-garde movements, *Tel Quel* was opposed to the bourgeoisie and to “revisionist” communist parties. At the same time, the journal fought against bourgeois aesthetics and the notion of an autonomous art.

III. 3. John Barth, Umberto Eco and the Postmodern “Literature of Replenishment”

In order to be as concrete and as explicit as possible, I should like to mention briefly another attempt at literary institutionalisation, this time in the USA. Its aim is the institutionalisation of a postmodern way of writing that breaks with avant-garde and modernist experiments and maps out the programme of a “readable”, “enjoyable” literature whose authors address a vast public.

One of the derogatory meanings of the word “postmodernism” cropped up between 1959 and 1960, when the American critics Irving Howe and Harry Levin dismissed post-war literature as “postmodern” — that is inferior. In their eyes, it was no match for the works of modernist masters such as T. S. Eliot, Thomas Mann, Joyce or Proust. “It remained for Leslie Fiedler and myself, among others”, Ihab Hassan remembers, “to employ the term during the sixties with premature approbation, and with a touch of bravado” (86). This is what I mean by “socio-linguistic situation”: it is the ongoing battle for classifications and definitions, for positive or negative meaning of words and texts.

In the literary world, John Barth also turns the tables on advocates of high modernism such as Howe and Levin when, in his well-known articles “The Literature of exhaustion” (1967) and “The Literature of Replenishment: Postmodernist Fiction” (1980), he criticises modernism for being anaemic and maps out postmodernist alternatives. He believes that the dismissal by the modernists of realist narrative, fictional illusion, bourgeois rationality and middle class moral values is far too one-sided: “Disjunction, simultaneity, irrationalism, anti-illusionism, self-reflexiveness, medium-as-message, political olympianism, and a moral pluralism approaching moral entropy — these are not the whole story either” (203).

The postmodern programme envisaged by Barth in his two manifesto-like articles, is meant to bridge the gap between literature and everyday life and pleads in favour of a synthesis between the narrative conventions of the nineteenth and the experiments of the twentieth century: “My ideal postmodernist author neither merely repudiates nor merely imitates either his twentieth-century modernist parents or his nineteenth-century premodernist grandparents” (203). Without radically breaking with the modernist tradition, Barth ponders on the values of pre-modernist aesthetics and poetics “whose historical roots are famously and honorably in middle-class popular culture” (203).

This plea in favour of a literary renovation based on a recourse to old narrative techniques may sound conservative; however, it anticipates Umberto Eco’s critique of modernism and the avant-garde three years later: “But the moment comes when the avant-garde (the modern) can go no further, because it has produced a metalanguage that speaks of its impossible texts (conceptual art). The postmodern reply to the modern

consists of recognizing that the past , since it cannot be really destroyed , because its destruction leads to silence , must be revisited: but with irony , not innocently” (67) .

Like Barth's two articles , Eco's "Postscript to the Name of the Rose" is a kind of manifesto , an attempt to institutionalise a new , postmodern way of writing that breaks with avant-garde radicalism. But naturally , articles and manifestos are not the only tools of literary institutionalisation. The most important texts that assure institutional success *are the literary works themselves*: the poems , the dramas and the novels. However , without the manifestos , articles and appeals , the social intentions and strategies would be less explicit , less clear.

Works Cited

- Adorno , T. W. . *Aesthetic Theory*. London: Athlone , 1999.
- Barth , J. . "The Literature of Replenishment. Postmodern Fiction". *The Friday Book: Essays and Other Non-Fiction*. London: The John Hopkins University Press , 1984.
- Barthes , R. . *Essais critiques*. Paris : Seuil , 1964.
- Bürger , P. . *Aktualität und Geschichtlichkeit. Studien zum gesellschaftlichen Funktionswandel der Literatur*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp , 1977.
- Burgess , A. . *A Clockwork Orange*. Harmondsworth: Penguin , 1972.
- Charvet , M. , and E. Krumm. *Tel Quel-un'avanguardia per il materialism*. Bari: Dedalo Libri , 1974.
- Coseriu , E. . "Thesen zum Thema *Sprache und Dichtung*." *Beiträge zur Textlinguistik*. Ed. W. -D. Stempel. Munich: Fink , 1971.
- Eco , U. . *Reflections on The Name of the Rose*. London: Secker and Warburg , 1984.
- Foucault , M. . "Distance , aspect , origine. " *Théorie d'ensemble*. Paris: Seuil , 1968.
- Hassan , I. . *The Postmodern Turn. Essays in Postmodern Theory and Culture*. Ohio: State University Press , 1987.
- Jakobson , R. Roman. "Linguistics and Poetics." *Selected Writings*. Vol. 3. The Hague-Paris-New York: Mouton , 1981.
- Jenkins , R. . *Pierre Bourdieu*. London-New York: Routledge , 1992.
- Joyce , J. . *Ulysses*. London: Penguin , 1971.
- Karsenti , B. . *Marcel Mauss. Lefait social total*. Paris : PUF , 1994.
- Kress , G. , and R. Hodge. *Language as Ideology*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul , 1979.
- Kristeva , J. . *Semiotikè. Recherches pour une sémanalyse*. Paris : Seuil , 1969.
- Lotman , Y. M. . *The Structure of the Artistic Text*. Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press , 1977.
- Marinetti , F. T. . "Fondazione e manifesto del futurismo." *Il futurismo italiano*. Ed. I. Gherarducci. Rome: Editori Riuniti , 1976.
- . "Manifesto tecnico della letteratura futurista." *Il futurismo italiano*. Ed. I. Gherarducci. Rome: Editori Riuniti , 1976.
- . "Uccidiamo il chiaro di luna!" *Il futurismo italiano*. Ed. I. Gherarducci. Rome: Editori Riuniti , 1976.
- Morson , Gary Saul. "The heresiarch of meta. " *PTL* 3 (1978):407-27.
- Proust M. . *Remembrance of Things Past*. Vol. 12. *Time Regained*. London: Chatto and Windus , 1970.
- Robbe-Grillet , A. . *Pour un nouveau roman*. Paris : Gallimard-Minuit , 1963.
- Schäfers B. . *Grundbegriffe der Soziologie*. Opladen: Leske-Budrich , 1986.
- Shewan , R. . *Oscar Wilde. Art and Egotism*. London: Macmillan , 1977.
- Szondi P. . *Theorie des modernen Dramas*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp , 1969.
- Todorov , T. . *La Littérature en péril*. Paris: Flammarion , 2007.
- . "Poétique. " *Qu'est-ce que le structuralisme?* Paris : Seuil , 1968.
- Zima , P. V. . *L'Ambivalence romanesque. Proust , Kafka , Musil*. Paris: L'Harmattan , 2002.
- . *Manuel de sociocritique*. Paris : L'Harmattan , 2000.

(责任编辑:范静哗)