

Revista Romaneasca pentru Educatie Multidimensionala

Romanian Journal for Multidimensional Education

ISSN: 2066 – 7329 (print), ISSN: 2067 – 9270 (electronic)

Covered in: Index Copernicus, Ideas RePeC, EconPapers, Socionet, Ulrich Pro Quest, Cabel, SSRN, Appreciative Inquiry Commons, Journalseek, Scipio, EBSCO, DOAJ

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Revista Romaneasca pentru Educatie Multidimensionala, 2013, Volume 5, Issue 1, June, pp:35-45

The online version of this article can be found at:

<http://revistaromaneasca.ro>

Published by:

Lumen Publishing House

On behalf of:

Lumen Research Center in Social and Humanistic Sciences

Bourdieu Sociologist of Literature

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Abstract

Bourdieu is an exceptional reader of the works of art from a sociological perspective and social structures themselves, as are represented in these works. His approach is to interpret the style itself with social structures in mind. Not surprisingly, he speaks of social strategies of writing. It's the strategy to be adopted and defined as social structural constraints of the field, but, besides these social strategies of writing, there is no doubt, and personal strategies of writing, only giving them a unique account of the writer.

The concepts that Bourdieu introduce to analyze the literature : field, habitus, culture capital, symbolic capital, managed to minimize the contrast between internal reading of a work and its external reading, that her explanation is through the social conditions of production and consumption.

This study examines Bourdieu's methodology for analysing literary works, and demonstrates that it offers genuine insights for those involve in literary study. It will show that Bourdieu's sociology accords literature a privileged status in struggles for political and aesthetic autonomy. This study also examines how Bourdieu understood the relationship between literature and politics.

Keywords: *sociology of literature, literary field, political field, illusio, doxa, nomos, habitus.*

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1. Bourdieu analyst literary texts

Pierre Bourdieu develops a new method of analysis of literary texts. He approaches the study of literature on three levels. First, he analyzes the field of literature in terms of the field of power. Then, he outlines the position of individuals, groups and institutions in the literary field. And finally, he traces the genesis of habitus cultural agents. This scheme of analysis adds to analyze literary texts work space and size transnațională world literary space. To this scheme of analysis we must add the analysis of literary texts in the work space and the transnational dimension of the world literary space.

Pierre Bourdieu, in his book, *The Rules of Art*, examines possible space, through each level. Before entering in the proper analysis of literary space, in the beginning of the book the author justifies the need for sociological research of literature, and that such a study would not affect the singularity of the artistic experience.

Bourdieu (2007) stated:

Is it true that scientific analysis is doomed to destroy that which makes for the specificity of the literary work and of reading, beginning with aesthetic pleasure? And that the sociologist is wedded to relativism, to the leveling of values, to the lowering of greatness, to the abolition of those differences which make for the singularity of the 'creator', always located in the realm of the Unique? And all because the sociologist is thought to stand on the side of the greatest number, the average, the mean, and thus of the mediocre, the minor, the minors, the mass of petty, obscure actors, justly unrecognized, and to be an ally of what is repugnant to the 'creators' of an era, the content and the context, the 'referent' and the hors-texte, beyond the pale of literature? (p. 20)

Bourdieu shows the opposite of this resistance to analysis in terms of scientific literature.

Many writers, literary critics and philosophers argue that the work of art experience is ineffable because, by definition, it escapes

rational knowledge and any sociological approach to analyze art would be profanatory.

Bourdieu's demonstration is opposed to this thinking, scientific analysis of the social conditions of production and reception of the artwork do not reduce or destroy, but enhance the literary experience.

The Rules of Art begins with an internal analysis of the work of Gustave Flaubert, *Sentimental Education*. At the outset of the analysis, Bourdieu has the courage to say that the novel provides all the tools of his own sociological analysis. Reading it is strictly internal and aims to build a model of immanent structure of the work.

According to Bourdieu's theory, Flaubert's novel provides us an accurate representation of the social world of nineteenth century France, the century in which the novel was written, and even Frédéric, it rendered the author himself. Bourdieu resists the temptation to read *Sentimental Education* as an autobiographical writing, or as a sociological document. For sociologists of literature, homolog of Frédéric's fictional world and the social world of Flaubert is located in their structure ("L'invention de la vie d'artiste", 1975). This novel structure is visible by its effects, as in ordinary life we can not see the whole system of relationships between groups and individuals who seem separated by geographical distance and time, so the structure in *Sentimental Education* is hidden through real character interactions that draw our attention.

Bourdieu divides the 20 protagonists of the novel into two main groups dominated by M. Arnoux and M. Dambreuse, art merchants and bankers, who have cultural and political power, or those who hold economic and political power. The reader will recognize the French power structure field, which is the opposition of culture and economics.

2. Autonomy of the literary field

The concept of autonomy is fundamental in Bourdieu's sociological thought on literary field, because fields are formed in a historical process of differentiation and autonomy. This process brings the characteristic provisions for a "pure" writer, motivated only by literature, and the birth of literary intelligentsia reflected, especially, by Zola.

According to Stănculescu (1996) autonomy is closely related to symbolic capital which gives force field rules and regulations, and also the cultural capital (“Les trois états du capital culturel”, 1979), which represents one of the conditions of production and of passing on specific cultural knowledge. Bourdieu highlights the emergence of the literary field as a long process of differentiation and accumulation of symbolic capital which is conducted in three stages.

First, he follows the development of the French literary field and its important moments until 1830, which Bourdieu identifies as a critical time when some writers turned their backs on reading in public and began a proper competition with rules and standards.

Then, he considers the opposition between art and money, which will be a second phase of autonomy in the French literary field, and develops fundamental mental structures of the field and structural principles during 1830-1880.

The third period is Zola's intervention in the Dreyfus affair, at which point the French writers have brought the field of French literature to its highest degree of autonomy.

Once the field will distinguish itself from other fields, it will require its own *nomos* members. *Nomos* means fundamental law or rules of the game that will likely determine the relative positions or positions taken by the agents involved in the field.

At the end of the second phase of training literary field, between 1830-1880, the French literary field stabilized in a dualistic structured split between a pure or autonomous pole and the commercial or heteronomous pole.

The distance between the two poles was fixed in people's minds as the opposition between art and money. For Bourdieu, the imposition of the principle of vision and division marked a giant step on the road to autonomy. Literature did not have to justify itself in terms of public popularity, or political or religious approval. This field can now produce its own values and legitimacy and is considered to be disinterested in, and irreducible to, monetary value.

For pure writers, money has become a means for the accomplishment of a goal to an end, but art was an end in itself. But if writers sacrifice their economic benefits they will receive a different symbolic capital, which offers its own rewards and satisfactions, and can

provide access to economic remuneration. Bourdieu defines symbolic capital as a recognized economic capital, or as legitimate. Bourdieu's theory on the relationship between money and art draws a fine line between the cynical view on economic self-interest and the idealization of literary life.

Zola and the Dreyfus affair. After gaining independence and the emergence of a dualistic structure, Zola's involvement in the Dreyfus affair (Swartz, 1997) led to the end of the self-development literature field. At this time, Zola was the most successful commercial writer in the history of France. But while Zola's books have found a growing market of readers, eager for new releases, he also won the respect of writers.

Zola's involvement in the Dreyfus Affair ended in ruin. All the prestige gained up to this point was lost, and the author was sent into exile. But his intervention proved decisive in changing public opinion about the officer Jew fall into disgrace. When the Dreyfus case was retried, Zola became a hero and nobody could doubt his integrity.

According to Bourdieu, Zola's action initiated writers self-imposed isolation and insularity which was accepted as the price of autonomy. Zola's intervention was based on the self.

Bourdieu stated:

Thus, paradoxically, it is the autonomy of the intellectual field that makes possible the inaugural act of a writer who, in the name of norms belonging to the literary field, intervenes in the political field thus constituting himself as an intellectual. 'J'accuse' is the outcome and the fulfilment of a collective process of emancipation that is progressively carried out in the field of cultural production: as a prophetic rupture with the established order, it reasserts against all reasons of state the irreducibility of the values of truth and justice and, at the same stroke, the independence of the guardians of these values from the norms of politics (those of patriotism, for example) and from the constraints of economic life. The intellectual is constituted as such by intervening in the political field in the name of autonomy and of the specific values of a field of cultural production which has attained a high degree of independence with respect to various powers (and this intervention is unlike that of the politician with strong cultural capital, who acts on the

basis of a specifically political authority, acquired at the price of a renunciation of an intellectual career and values). (p. 180)

Zola was not converted into a politician, but politics intervened as an intellectual, in the name of the value and principles which were works in his own field. Bourdieu does not embrace the idea that with gaining autonomy, intellectuals lose their political power.

In fact, Bourdieu sees a qualitative change in the form of the same power, which only depends on political legitimacy, but is able to provide a rival authority. Similarly, it challenges the assumption that intellectuals sacrifice the field of literature when they take part in political life.

3. Power field and literary field

The first stage in Bourdieu's analysis is to locate literature as a field status group (Weber) power field. The power field is defined by Bourdieu (2007) :

The field of power is the space of relations of force between agents or between institutions having in common the possession of the capital necessary to occupy the dominant positions in different fields (notably economic or cultural). It is the site of struggles between holders of different powers (or kinds of capital) which, like the symbolic struggles between artists and the 'bourgeois' in the nineteenth century, have at stake the transformation or conservation of the relative value of different kinds of capital, which itself determines, at any moment, the forces liable to be engaged in these struggles. (p. 287)

Close to the notion of the ruling class is a relational concept, which seeks to remove from the study populations, groups or isolated agents, to study relational structure that exists between them. The notion of field of power involves a breach of representation found in the form of the Marxist social world, the owners of the means of production are against labor. The power field is divided into competing factions and polarizes economic and political power holders, which dominate everything, and holders of cultural capital, which in structural terms is the subordinate economic pole - political, but with symbolic power can legitimize or discredit the dominant group.

What Bourdieu describes in his studies about French culture and society, is a historical feature of the power field, which took its

present form since the second half of the nineteenth century, in the time of Flaubert, the cultural capital has become almost entirely dissociated from the economic. Indeed, Bourdieu finds an exact description of the field of power in *Sentimental Education* (“L'invention de la vie d'artiste”, 1975). At one pole, Bourdieu positions M. Dambreuse and rich bankers who have a high economic capital and other tangible assets, but a relatively low cultural capital (educational qualifications, cultural knowledge, artistic skill). At the other extreme, we positioned the artists and intellectuals who are grouped with art dealer Arnoux, who has a very high cultural capital, but relatively small economic one. In the central position, he puts lawyers, doctors, and senior bureaucrats of the state, which have economic and cultural capital alike. Here Bourdieu puts Frédéric and Flaubert himself. Bourdieu also argues that power is a trans-field structure and is quasi-universal, surviving in various forms over the centuries, giving birth in different cultures and civilizations.

Bourdieu argues that literary field value is linked to its own autonomy, which can be measured by its ability to resist or ignore writers external applications (especially religious, political or commercial).

Bourdieu argues that the value of literature is linked to its own autonomy, which can be measured by its ability to resist or ignore writers from other societal sectors (especially religious, political or commercial).

Symbolic power and autonomy granted to writers is manifested by their ability to challenge the temporal power, citing their own norms and values (truth, rights, beauty etc.) against the dominant values (orders, profit, power).

Positioning the literary field in the power field can help us understand why some writers are undecided in their profession and their representations in practice when they get there. For example, when we know, that, the literary field occupies a dominant position in the power field, we can understand the ambivalence that many writers express through their fluctuating political alliances.

To varying degrees, depending on their position in the field of literature, writers seek to define themselves in the field, offset by what they lack in economic capital accumulated cultural capital. Bourdieu identifies three types of cultural capital (“Les trois états du capital

culturel”, 1979): objectified status as the cultural capital can exist in the form of cultural goods (pictures, books, dictionaries, cars). Cultural capital can exist as long incorporated the provisions of mind and body. Cultural capital can be internalized during socialization that inculcate provisions and schemes patterns of perception and appreciation necessary to engage in cultural practices.

Bourdieu adds a third form of cultural capital that is institutionalizes status. Actions of formal accreditation (accreditation educational positions recognized university positions, literary prizes, etc.) guarantee the social value of cultural capital by providing symbolic recognition and, more or less indirectly, to have access to economic payment. The field of literature is relatively autonomous to power, but includes fighting between writers (Lazăr, 2002). However, due to the influential economic and political field, the literary field was always divided into two large groups or subfields, which is guided by two opposing principles.

To French literature from the nineteenth century to the present, Bourdieu positioned at one pole on the bestseller writers, whose success is measured by the number of copies sold, and his popularity among the public and media. Bourdieu is calling these writers heteronomus, understanding by this term that their state is influenced by norms and standards from the external field.

Bourdieu positioned them along the spectrum of pure or autonomous, based on judgments that came only from writers of the same field, for which commercial success too quickly may become suspicious.

Although these writers tend to be less successful in commercial terms (particularly at the beginning of their career), they receive a specific benefit conferred or symbolic capital of field (literary prizes, the ability to publish to a recognized publisher, etc.), with which they can earn recognition in the wider community gradually, and may finally earn consecration in the school and the university, is introduced in canon or curriculum (Swartz, 1997). It is, then, a structural homology from the field of literature and field of power, which is also divided into two hierarchical principles and two competitive forms of power. As social space considered as a whole, the field of literature also has dominant and dominated fractions. Dominant pole positions are occupied by self-

ordained, who made a name by setting a new trend, or being associated with a particular style or genre. These authors have come to establish themselves beyond the field, where their growing reputation attracted a large audience.

Dominant positions are occupied by the opposite faction satisfying the dominant public. They get along with great financial rewards, and benefit bourgeois consecration. Popular writers are undoubtedly discredited. Opposite popular writers are the new avant-garde writers who challenge the consecrated ones.

The degree of autonomy of a field of cultural production is reflected in the extent to which external hierarchical principles are subject to the principle of internal hierarchy: the higher self, the ratio is more favorable symbolic forces most independent producers and demand is emphasized even more distance between the two poles of the field, or subfield of restricted production, where customers are not only producers but the other producers moreover, their direct competitors, and high production subfield, which is symbolically excluded and discredited. External hierarchy principle that works temporarily dominant regions of the field strength (but also economic field), so as fleeting success, measured by indices of commercial success (circulation of books, number of representatives of some plays, etc.). Or of a social awareness (decorations, functions etc.), primacy is known and recognized artists to the public.

Bourdieu (2007) stated:

Internal hierarchy principle, that is the degree of consecration specific, favors artists who are known and recognized by their peers and only them (at least in the initial phase of their work), and which owes its prestige, even in a negative sense, that make no concession to the general public. (pp. 289-290)

4. The social trajectory and habitus

The social trajectory represents successive positions occupied by the same agent or group of agents in successive spaces. Any social trajectory must be understood as a social space through a singular expressing provisions habitus. A writers trajectory is defined as positions successively occupied by an agent or group in space of possible. The

second term habitus is close to the traditional notion of character. Habitus is the product of conduct, behavior, and ethos.

The Latin word habitus is closer to Greek *hexis*, in Plato's *Theaetetus*, it involves effort and concentration to be careful (Gheorghiu, 2000). Habitus is how we see ourselves in relation to others, how to pay attention to certain things and not others, and determine our attitudes not only towards people but also to the world of goods and cultural practices that are available, what Bourdieu called lifestyle spaces (Bourdieu, 2007).

How are habitus and social trajectories determined? According to Bourdieu's theory, we internalize the information provided in the social environment surrounding us since childhood. Indeed, the first field for Bourdieu is the family that has its own natural power relations, economic and symbolic, measured in terms of disease, age and confidence.

In our family, we first learn the meaning of what we are and to whom we belong. The socialization process continues with various initiation rites and institutions, from the obvious (a professional qualification, starting a job, a promotion, marriage etc.) to the finest (a tribute), becoming the person our families, institutions, society and even we, expect ourselves to be.

The writers must always be place in the field with the latest information on the development of the field, to have what Bourdieu calls "a sense of placement" or "game sense", which will allow them to anticipate where they will meet the most symbolic and economic capital, not just where they are now.

The writers who have entered the depths of literary culture from a young age not only internalize the sounds and rhythm of poetry and prose, but meaning rhythm of change that took place in the field, when their positions in the field become too popular and stable, they should try something new. These writers also have social capital (networks of friends and acquaintances), and expertise (literary heritage awareness), to know when and where certain positions are agglomerate is undeveloped potential. These writers also have social capital (networks of friends and acquaintances) and expertise (literary heritage awareness), and know when and where certain positions have appeared with undeveloped potential.

Bourdieu identifies two types of social trajectories within the literary field. The first is limited to one sector of the field, and is on the same axis of consecration, which moves in the negative, zero and positive. These are downward trajectory, static upward within the same sector of the field, measured in terms of an accumulation less than or greater economic and cultural capital.

Bourdieu distinguishes several general categories of trajectories intergenerational in the literary field: direct ascent from the popular classes, lower and middle classes, diagonal from the petty bourgeoisie or the owners of shops and peasantry, transverse or horizontal from a businessman field strength or the central positions. And finally, there are cases of pure breeding, when children become writers themselves, children of parent writers.

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