



A Sociological Study of The *Plague* of Albert Camus Through Genetic Structuralism by Lucien Goldmann*

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THE sociological critique of literature is a new science that seeks to study the influence of society on literature and the influence of literature on society. Even though a literary work claims to be devoid of sociological marks, it is never separated from the political and social realities of its time. Before trying to find a distinct relation between literature and society, it should be noted that language is above all a social fact and literature, as an art of language, is a social fact per se. During his/her life, a writer is under the direct or indirect influence of political, social and cultural facts that leave, implicitly or explicitly, their marks in literary works. But it must be added that the sociology of literature only believes in a reciprocal relationship between literature and society. Society influences literature and literature has an effect on society.

*Received: 2018/10/07

Accepted: 2019/05/03

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Moreover, it happens sometimes that a literary work does not conform to the reality of its time. A literary work can sometimes describe a picturesque and rich city in which political freedom reaches its peak, while this city is only a utopia imagined by the author who lives in an autocratic society. The writer is the opposite of the imposed ideology of the society in which he lives. We sometimes can't find any trace that allows us to introduce it as a social or asocial work, but the source of this isolation and this type of representation (utopian) is not perceptible in the political, cultural and social situations of the writer's time. For Goldmann, all literary imagination finds its genesis in the social fact and a work does not have to be necessarily realistic to be able to express the social reality. The worldview of the writer, who is influenced by the cultural and social status of his environment, contributes to the formation of a considerable part of his literary creation. In the same way, according to the theory of Lucien Goldmann, the literary work is the expression of the worldview of a social group. So, unlike his predecessors, he values the text and thus tries to unify literary life and social life. Goldmann considers a literary work as a product of an autonomous internal logic that can be independent of the conscious intentions of the author. Accordingly, this article is not intended to take into account the intention of the author. But we try, through the theory of genetic structuralism, to begin our study with an analysis of textual structures and then to find the genesis of these textual data in the structures of society. For this study, we chose a famous novel by Albert Camus, *The Plague*. Our aim will therefore be to illustrate analogies between the structure of the work and that of society, and to find out in what way *The Plague* is its representation and reflection. What's important for Goldmann and what is known as "genetic structuralism" is to reveal the relationship that may exist between the internal structures of the work and the socio-cultural context, or in a word the "extra-text". For this purpose, neither the biography of the author nor his psychoanalysis are sought, rather, the author only plays the role of an intermediary between his possible consciousness and the literary work. The genesis of this novel must be sought in all intersubjective textual and non-textual relationships. So, our research consists of a theoretical basis and a practical basis. The first part contains the theory of "comprehension" and the "explanation" of the text. "Comprehension" is, in fact, the discovery and description of the significant internal structures of the text; in short, it means the textual knowledge of the reader, or more precisely of the literary sociology, before inserting the text in a social context. So, the "comprehension" aims at studying the "intra-text" and the internal structure of the literary work, an approach which pushes us to concentrate on the constituent elements of our object of study: *The Plague*. The study of the physical and moral aspects of the main characters, the analysis of the central themes and a spatiotemporal study of the text will orient us

towards a very detailed analysis which characterizes the foundation of the Goldmanian thesis. In the "explanation" phase, the critic makes an extra-textual search and tries to discover the relation between the intra-text and the extra-text. As a result, the literary work that is studied and understood in its internal structure, can only be explained in the relationship it has with the context of its production. In other words, the explanation aims first to examine the social and historical structures that can have an effect on the internal structures of the text, and then seeks the meaning of the intra-text in these global and external structures. It is then necessary to integrate the apparent gains of the process of the comprehension with the sociological data on extra-textual. The second part of our research is about putting the theory in practice. To gain access to the intra-text of *The Plague*, we can first highlight the components of the text such as time, space, themes, characters, and the relationship between these structures in a microscopic plane and those of extra-text in a macroscopic plane. Therefore, our study is, in this part, focused on "Space and Time", and "Characters and Themes." Finally, we will do an extra-textual study and examine the social facts which contributed to the appearance of *The Plague*.

Keywords— Albert Camus, genetic structuralism, Lucien Goldmann, *The Plague*

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