

Socio-Political Issues in German Post-Reunification Novels

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Since the reunification era, Germany had entered a new phase in economy, which among other was seen in the use of technology and innovation. This has changed work structure which is one of the main themes of German literature.

“The discourse on the change in work structure is considered to emerge since the second decade after the reunification period which is very relevant for further studies to know the actuality of *Arbeit* theme in German society through literary work,” said Syamsu Rijal in his doctoral promotion exam on Tuesday (24/4) at Faculty of Cultural Sciences UGM.

He said in literary world, *Arbeit* (work) always became a part on German literature, even since the Middle Age. This can be tracked down through anthology and bibliography that specifically raised themes of *Arbeit* and *Arbeitslosigkeit* (unemployment), antonym of *Arbeit*.

“Since the 20th century, unemployment themed literature has become an inseparable part of socio-political issues in Germany,” he said.

In his dissertation entitled *Theme of Culture of Arbeit in Three Novels in Post-Reunification Germany*, Syamsu sought to find what is offered by the novels as a response to the condition of the surrounding society, whether in the form of negation, innovation, or affirmation of essential relations

forms between literary works and their society.

The novels are *Das Jahr der Wunder* (Year of Wonder) by Reiner Merkel (2001), *Wir Schlafen Nicht* (We Don't Sleep) by Katrin Roggla (2004), and *Mobbing* (Bullying) by Annette Pehnt (2007).

“The three novels were not just born in the second decade after the reunification, but they had strong theme of Arbeit in them. It means that Arbeit is not just a side-theme but the main theme,” said the lecturer from Universitas Negeri Makassar.

He found that the loose work relations after the reunification had forced the workers to lose more of their rights, which made them exploited consciously as well as alienated from their own work. Seeing the condition, the three novelists wanted to awaken their readers that a social gap and oppression had taken place against human dignity.

“The writers wanted humanisation of Arbeit in their society by returning the goal of the *Arbeit*, realising *Gute Arbeit* that would lead to the elevation of human dignity,” said Syamsu.

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