

<p>THE CANON FOR THE STUDY OF LITERATURE</p>		<p>Literature</p> <p>Keywords: canon, literature, educational programs, Walter Benjamin, literature, etc.</p>
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<p>Abstract</p> <p>Different surveys in this field bring into our attention some important questions concerning the teaching of literature in schools: Is it possible to find new ways to study and present literature? Can the literature be an offered literature and not a continuous one, at least at school studies based on the principle of "reading pleasure" or as a virtue and necessity of the time we are talking? Can literature be concerned in the main object "student" and not be a compulsory subject seen by the student as a whole set of works and authors stuck in certain periods of time that doesn't tell anything about his present? Which should then be the canon¹ of the literature educational programs? Based on different analysis on how the selection of works and authors has evolved in school curricula, results that the canon now has to tend to a transversal and open selection of literary works.</p>

Is it possible to find new ways to study and present literature? Can the literature be an offered literature and not a continuous one, at least at school studies based on the principle of "reading pleasure" or as a virtue and necessity of the time we are talking? Can literature be concerned in the main object "student" and not be a compulsory subject seen by the student as a whole set of works and authors stuck in certain periods of time that doesn't tell anything about his present? Which should then be the canon¹ of the literature educational programs? This question seem to be difficult to understand because of the strict rules of logic which have not been able to be dismissed, that forces us to follow a linear continuity to solve the problem, however the importance of it, it is almost impossible to make an overcross from one argument to another without creating fragmentation or chaos. Making this kind of question comes as a result of the big changes that the cybernetics century brings in the way of perception of space and time or past and present. If man for centuries has considered the progress of society as an evolutionary process, in development, in search of improvement, based on ideology or running toward utopia, after the world 80s and our 90s, this way of perception has changed: man no longer consider the progress of society as development, but as a change of state, not progressively or increasingly, as a space extension or expansion where the dream of improvement in the framework of an utopian ideology seems to have been interrupted. To analyze these changes it is necessary to focus in a philosophical explanation because as we all know almost every way of thinking comes from philosophy, or is being interpreted by it. Maybe this dilemma on the historical interpretation of society has been explained for the first time in a postmodern perspective from the visionary philosopher Walter Benjamin. In his thesis on Klee's angel¹, the Jewish philosopher changes deeply the traditional concept of the Hegelian perception on the proportion of present and past: according to him, it is wrong to conceive the present as a consequence and resultant of the past;

¹ See: Sul concetto di storia, Walter Benjamin, Torino, Giulio Einaudi Publisher, 1997.

the past must be understood as the other side of the coin of the present, produced and derived from it. It is the very present that creates the past itself and the past cannot exist without a present which proves and rebuilds it. How can we understand this in literature?

A contemporary author is obviously much more understandable by the reader, since the past is translated and raised in him, which is reflected diachronically, presented externally with the present. This means the stratification in the creator's psyche and as a result of the text created by him from both the past and the present, the interaction between them without chronological flow according to dialectical logic. Contemporary absorbs this fine art of literature without forcing, because they are both readers and creators, products of the same time and space. After absorbing the main core that is spread in hundred of branches, the reader, or also the researcher, follows this lines to arrive a better understanding of the deep structure of the text and all of it's details.

It is a research that starts from the fruit to its roots and not vice versa. These threads lead to other authors, works and directions extending such a cognitive range not only for an author or work but also with the supporting network. Horizontal and vertical expanding on different themes, styles, symbols, times, ages and nationalities, also being in touch with other auxiliary disciplines that have always been closely linked to literature. A new way of arranging knowledge and values, no longer based on chronological history, but in timeless and important values for the present. Then which is the selective principle: gender, themes, letters? All at the same time serving a practicality: the enjoyment of reading and the usefulness of the present. We are starting to generate knowledge from an unscientific way, such as that of the computer search principle, where the links create a network of knowledge and information. Such a comparison would seem ridiculous for a scientific study, since what is considered to be true or as knowledge for the computer is just subject to the law of communication and speed: with as many people a data communicates, as soon as possible, the more important it becomes. If until now knowledge meant an experience passing through tiredness and research, today the same energy is spent on extension and motion. Is the post thinking confusing man's logic and collapsing an erection of hard-earned values? Is this kind of research and study a superficial zapping that does not preserve values, but just makes it smoother, equates it, or maybe according to the speed in which it's obliged to pass absorbs only the most important one and skips the unnecessary one? This is a dilemma that maybe we can't exhaustively answer even though it must be accepted that such a phenomenon is the result of nowadays crisis of values that should be used in favor of human beings. In crisis time are presented the most important questions by changing the tradition and by awakening new energies. Thus, the presentation and studying of literature should be understood not as an overwhelmingly superficial overcoming from one age to another, from one author to another, but as a connecting communication, which in itself means finding the common and highlighting the differences, utilizing what is needed. What might need a modern man to adapt to the cultures and literature "globalization"?² Maybe the human essence, not just a limited national identity, but the personal identity as a human being, which literature better than any science can shape. What does than the

² A case of globalization is Harold Bloom's "Western Canon", in which the books and authors are to be studied in schools.

basic principle of this time mean, the communication and speed one, in the field of literary? It doesn't mean segmenting and closing folders of different ages and periods, but it means studying a work, an author or direction, which do not necessarily have to start with a literary observations.

A canon that communicates and has something to say to the contemporary world and that still keeps the connections with the present: in this way, parallel lines can be created that, by emphasizing, emphasize peculiarities and approximations: cinema/literature, music/literature, science / literature. The risk of studying literature nowadays and defining the canon has two different perspectives: with dogmatism we risks to create a stiff and closed history, while nihilism completely deny the possibility of determining a canon for study. Neither fish nor fowl? It is difficult to accept, but in relativity time this would be the situation, while in essence they are always lasting and reinterpreted values: a new Naim, not necessarily everything that was written at that time for the benefit of the national unification remains valid for today's reader.

The addition of authors and works and the super-production, especially nowadays when literature is subject to market laws and cyclically erodes itself and when even for the most attentive researcher is difficult to get information and to deepen this overcrowded market, will necessarily bring into the implementation of the modern period progress in literature as well. Which will be then the evaluation criterion to select, to leave behind the kitch works and to transmit to the generation what they really need, considering that selection is the indicator of human intelligence (by the word etymology itself: intelligence/ligere/eligere). The busy life continues to grow every day which means it needs to be more practical and easy going. The students of the future will not be able to absorb the entire long line of authors and works, they will not be able to undertake in-depth studies, they will need to know how to choose the works that will please and enrich them spiritually and aesthetically, which work will share messages for them, which of them is valid. The system which lift up national and patriotic values has fallen, at a time when state borders are being wiped out, the rise of any kind of ideology has fallen, and the only thing that faces time is without any doubt the aesthetic values of a work based on the praise of human spiritual values, the essence of humanity, which unites the literature of all countries without nationality distinction. The result of this logic brings us to the conclusion that to study a work nowadays it is necessary for this work to please tastes and to educate. Often this second alternative is dubitable. For a school canon this is a principle that cannot and should not be ignored.

The essence lies in a historic overthrow: not from the past to the present, but from the present to the past: isn't this also an overthrown continuity? No if it is not done consistently. The analysis of a today's text can be done by comparing it with texts or authors that are not necessarily listed in continuity. In this sense will survive only those authors who have a communication with the reader, which have had an impact on the formation of a generation or a community, or authors who can find something in common with today's reader, who are able to educate and cherish them spiritually. I would even say that we could have a lot of works that communicates with the reader. We would have a map with a combination of works and authors which have something in

common in ideas and aesthetic values and not in time, would have something in common in space and not in time, so we would have an extended map of the literature instead of a linear history. “Natural and linear time should be replaced with meaningful and marking structure”³, which otherwise would be: Why should not the natural age, and not the meaning age, become the mark and the milestone of the construction of the literary structure required to be passed on to generations?

How about free study, simply analogical as in American studies, not necessarily linear and historical? It is impossible not to take into account the historical concept even in the analysis of contemporaries, so it is not about overcoming the historical context in the interpretation of an author or work because it would not make sense since the work is closely related to the time that produced it, but maybe it could be reinterpreted by overcoming today's critical modernity in the work of the past.

Could we maybe fail to comprehend a literature since the extremities would become ununlockable, not systematized in a system. It's true. The continuous anxiety of the human being has always been a whole lack of involvement in his mind of knowledge, as a single one, as a closed system, but the mistake stands exactly in this attempt. It is impossible to have a complete conclusion of a literature, not only because the process is ongoing, but because even the past has always been a reinterpretation in time. There are works that lose their value with time because they are closely related with the period when they were created and do not have all-time messages. Maybe all this is an attempt to understand the lawfulness of nowadays and to search for an interpretation of it in literature. But it is always better making new discoveries that will definitely initially be chaotic and often contradictory, rather than hold on strong ancient and rotten pillars which may probably fall down and get us inside.

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³ “Crisi, canone e traducibilita”, Roberto Antonelli, University of Sapienza, to *Reflections on the canon of Italian literature*, *Quaderns d'Italia*, 4\5, 1999-2000, pg. 16.