

LITERATURE, CULTURE AND LANGUAGE: AXIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract:

The article deals with treating the literary text from an axiological perspective. There are highlighted the roles of literature in building positive attitudes, such as self-esteem, tolerance towards others, curiosity towards life. The literary text portrays the human experience and considers some new opportunities to analyse/comprehend beliefs, values as literature can not only be used to inform about life but to transform life.

Keywords: *stratum, social, literary text, axiology, acquisition, literature.*

Literature is a source of pleasure, a quest for meaning and form, it facilitates the process of students' social, cognitive and emotional development. In order to give meaning, literature offers readers the possibility to penetrate into the world which surrounds them as the readers try to identify with the characters, their behaviour. They tend to understand the characters' feelings and assumptions, the literature helps them clarify feelings and put them into words.

The young readers who deal with such emotions as sadness, distress, humiliation, can identify with a character that passes through the same problems as them, and maybe the character comes throughout the story with solutions as he portrays in the literary work the human qualities. Consequently, the character helps the reader choose the best way out or simply become more confident, tolerant and helpful.

Literature has resources to encourage the reader to make up reflections on his way of life (agreement, contradiction, inconsistency), to open doors to other realities, to understand other cultures, ways of thinking, to interact easily with their peers.

The more students discuss on literary texts, the more chance they have of developing creativity, critical thinking and analytical spirit. Through

questionnaires, commentaries, discussions on literature, students learn to realize their mistakes, recognize inaccuracies in their understanding, to look for modalities to get rid of hesitation or uncertainties, to accept the others' point of view or just contradict those which are inappropriate for them.

The more students read, the more their reading skills are developed, the tasks become easier to be fulfilled and the students find reading quite fun and an enjoyable activity. On the contrary, the reader who practices less reading, their learning skills decrease and regularly avoids all kind of activities.

While interpreting a literary text, the learners may shape good judgements by studying the linguistic structures of the text, which gives them the possibility to achieve a high level of the understanding of the meaning rendered in the text. The didactic approach has a lot of benefits in the process of making literature accessible for students and namely, it represents an efficient resource to boost the language acquisition. The number of styles and registers covered by the literary text give floor to different interpretations that enhance interaction and collaboration. The literary text has the power to generate different conversational topics.

In the light of those mentioned above, literary texts include elements from people's culture; thus, they are regarded as a representative of a nation's culture. It's a complex issue as the comprehension of culture has acquired new values and nuances, some other elements aiming the work of art.

As a result, it is desirable to give the definition of culture. When we refer to culture we should take into account the values, traditions, socio-cultural background and social practices of a community reflected in the literary text. There are some other definitions attributed to culture. A meaningful one, universally known, is regarded as the competence to judge things clearly and efficiently, to pass some knowledge to the other generations, to get well-bred through reading, learning or studying literary texts. Literary texts may reflect a great diversity of cultural values. Students are asked to read literary works by authors of different countries. The students' exposure to the inner structure of the authors' texts offers learners various possibilities to assimilate some elements of the culture they face in the literary text, and willingly or unwillingly, they distinguish the differences

between cultures and we think they take from the texts the best practices, examples of being patient, flexible, tolerant and understanding.

In the process of text analysis students can acquire skills through a cultural transfer. The connection of literature and culture implies a deep reflection of reality in different literary genres, even if this reality is filtered by the writer as it is his piece of fiction. Still, we believe that the literary text is the mirror of the social, political and historical events that form the sketch of the text. It shows the context of the human behaviour and thinking.

According to the Romanian scientist Vl. Pâslaru, the values are creations of people and they always create them in relation with their external and internal world. In both cases, the creation of values is generated by a personal motivation, which underlines the implicit educational value of culture.¹

The communicative exploration of the literary text is state of art. Communication activities based on the literary text stimulate students' interaction in fulfilling tasks which require personal solution, experience. As we know, all students have different life experience and while treating a literary text they propose various interpretative solutions which cause differences of opinion, opinion gap, contradictions. Only through discussion, dialogue and collaboration, these misunderstandings can be removed. Speaking in a constructive way leads to the scaffolding of general human values.

One of the missions of the school is to make students think about the values of the societies. The correlation of literature with values comes from the past and will continue to be a vital component in the teaching of a foreign language. For example, the teachers' discourse can be regarded as a value for students. The choice of words, emotions, style, tone, plays a central role in creating values which may vary over time.

Literature is not just an ideological discourse on the outside world. It represents a universe with all its issues with values. Literary texts define literary heritage which tends to be transmitted as a common culture.

Furthermore, it is up to the reader if to accept or reject the values carried out by the characters and this implies the reconfiguration of the literary text in the interpretative process. This importance of axiological anchoring in interpretative activity removes any a priori hierarchy between naive reading and expert reading.

1 Pâslaru Vl. *Introducere în teoria educației literar-artistice*, Chișinău, Museum, 2001; Ed. a II-a, București, Editura Sigma, 2013, 198 p.

The naive reading can be enriched or transformed through the interpretation performed by the colleagues who discuss on the degree of acceptability of the readings. Their interpretation contributes to an expert reading. Discussions on the forms and contents of the values reinforce the human relationships, they work on the possibilities and limits of language, literature, doubtless more than any other art.

Writers are the first to experience it, who sometimes want to describe the moral, social and political problems of their time, sometimes undertake to challenge, subvert or reform dominant values, sometimes question the very notion of value, sometimes still suffer the wrath of a society that feels outraged, even threatened.²

But readers usually look in literary texts for intelligible representations of pieces of life that shed light on themselves and on those they meet, help them understand and evaluate situations and behaviours, enrich them with imaginary experiences and thus contribute to their personal training thanks to what certain sociologists of reading nicely call a *ready-to-wear identity*.³

For Nathalie Heinich, the notion of value refers to all the perceptions that a person shares with his social group. Value determines what is lawful, desirable, acceptable.⁴

The fiction arousing emotions and therefore reactions in the reader, it would necessarily organize axiological reactions useful for building an appreciation or evaluation of ethical issues of diegesis. In other words, values were acknowledged as true universals seen as worthy of explaining socially significant activities that contributed to the aspects of truth, beauty and forms of the good life. Finally, the value of "utility" sub served the continuance of individual and social life. According to Sorokin, these concepts can explain socially significant human activity and may be taken to represent the true universals.⁵

It may be stated that values and ideals maintain and regulate the visible social structures and interactions on the one hand, and impart cohesion and stability to them on the other. Despite being subjective and invisible,

2 Karl Canvat et Georges Legros, *Valeurs dans/de la littérature*, coll. « Diptyque », Presses Universitaires de Namur, 2004.

3 https://www.fabula.org/actualites/les-valeurs-dans-de-la-litterature_10483.php

4 Heinich N., *Des valeurs. Une approche sociologique*, Paris, Gallimard, 2017, pp. 133-135.

5 Cowell, F. R., *Values in Human Society: the Contributions of P.A. Sorokin in Sociology*, Boston, Porter Sargent, 1970.

they are significant aspects of society and underlie all relationships. Values possessed by an individual are not innate. They are the end products of the individual's socialization process, which starts from the time of the birth and continues throughout life. The standards of success or failure set by any given adult may well be traced back to values learnt in childhood.⁶

For Mr. Nussbaum, the purpose of literature is to teach us to *live well*. Since Man is an affective and social being, the "good" existence is one that knows how to strike a balance between feeling and reason while being useful to the community. It then becomes possible to prioritize texts according to their ethical scope. The criterion is very simple: the more a work teaches me to recognize the good, the better it is as literature. Greek tragedies thus warn us against the lack of humanity of overly "rational" behaviours; Proust's texts show us the fragility of happiness; and R. Wright's novels the ignominy of racism. Certainly, Nussbaum acknowledges, literature can stage the dark forces of the individual and the tensions of social life; but the possible subversive scope of the text is immediately neutralized: the force of such works would indeed, in revealing to us our share of shadow, lead us to question ourselves in order to get us back on track. understood that each individual aspires to righteousness and balance.⁷

What Nussbaum doesn't seem to accept until the end of 19 is that literature has a value as such, regardless of the particular values inscribed in a particular text. The experience gained by literary texts is first and foremost related to the type of relationship that is maintained with them and which is related to their specificity as objects of communication.⁸

Conclusions

It is a known fact that literature can help us live by showing us how to behave well and by opening up perspectives. The important thing is not whether the point of view conveyed by a text is good or bad, but whether it is possible, whether it is part of the virtualities of the human being.

6 Gilmer, B. Von Haller, *Applied Psychology. Adjustments in living and Work*, New York, McGraw Hill Book Co., 1975.

7 Nussbaum M., *The Fragility of Goodness. Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy*, Cambridge – New York, Cambridge University Press, 1986.

8 Jouve Vincent, *Valeurs littéraires et valeurs morales : la critique éthique en question*, Université de Reims-Champagne Ardenne, 2001.

Our relationship to fictional communities is filtered by various contracts that don't allow us to become replicas in the real society. The strength of literature is, on the contrary, to evoke an original experience by playfully confronting us with otherness. Not playing the game is giving up one of the major (and most expensive) paid intellectual conquests of European civilization: its ability to question itself.

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