

## HERMENEUTICS AND LITERARY PEDAGOGY

### The Approach of a Textbook

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#### Why should we deal with the issue of approach?

When Hans Georg Gadamer was asked in an interview, how could we explain, what hermeneutics really is, the "father" of modern hermeneutics answered that people do not need to understand the exact meaning of the word "hermeneutics", because everybody *knows* it already - from experience. Our life permanently places us in hermeneutic situations: nobody can avoid this experience. We are in a hermeneutic situation whenever we try to throw light upon some obscure thing or inconceivable phenomenon as we find it important to understand what it is all about. We all know that nothing attracts us more and engages our interest, thoughts and our whole being more than something which withdraws itself from our understanding, although we consider it vital to see through secrets.

The pedagogical conception in question is therefore based on a well-known experience: we are always in a situation of understanding, because in the things we wish to know and learn there is always something not understood; something that waits for our understanding... In other words, this pedagogy is based on the acknowledgement of the *relativity of knowledge*. Whether we like it or not, we must admit that we are always at a distance from that which we wish to understand.

It is perhaps the teacher who most often experiences the specific nature of understanding as it is his daily task to render things understandable, just as the translator, that is, to help pupils through the difficulties of understanding. Therefore the teacher is not only "within" some hermeneutic situation but he must continually *reflect* on what this situation evokes in him, in order to make pupils understand things. His position is "more hermeneutic" than others'.

We feel often hopeless, but sometimes inspiring the task of making understandable the ununderstandable, bringing home something that was far away. Therefore the teacher's explanation *mediates between worlds*: it results in bringing something from the sphere of obscurity into our world.

But how difficult is this task nowadays when knowledge changing day after day in this age of information explosion continually leads to the question: is it

not already outdated what we teach? *What should we teach and how should we teach it* so that pupils will possess an up-to-date basis of knowledge when they finish school or indeed so that their education will not prove to be too anachronistic?

These questions are not unfamiliar to the literature teacher either.

Teaching literature itself raises difficulties in understanding. Literary texts differ from other texts as the latter must be *unambiguous* (the more unequivocal the text, the more functional it is). Unlike these, the literary text does not let itself be understood immediately. Besides, the more we try to render a work understandable, the more it becomes clear that this cannot completely be done. The literary text "says" most when it *conceals* something and this cannot (and should not) be "explained away". I think it is unnecessary to detail how absurd the situation of the literature teacher is because of the strange nature of literature: how can one *speak* about something which should rather be left in the realm of *silence*?

The situation in which literature and culture has been dragged by the rapid spread of modern means of communication also poses seemingly insoluble problems for the literature teacher. Worldwide surveys in the sociology of reading warn us that reading has been ousted out from its traditional position by visions, sounds and many other natural impressions coming to us through millions of channels. (But we do not need surveys in the sociology of reading to learn what we experience day by day.)

What can we do then?

When we have *asked* this question we have actually *understood* a *hermeneutic situation which is vital for us*. The energy arising from this question is an impulse on the way towards understanding our situation and this points towards a solution. The main conclusion of hermeneutic reflection is that *we must always commence with understanding the situation in which we are*. This is a really positive lesson; it is worth applying it in our deeds, because the starting point is not the recognition of certain *absences* which could fill us with despair but that of a *given situation* which raises problems; trying to find solutions for them could be the meaning of our life.

Let us consider then what is *given* in this situation!

First: there is the *multimedia world*: whether we approve of it or not, plenty of stimuli, impressions and information reach us; various new possibilities of manifestation and reception appear in addition to the traditional forms of cultural communication (reading, writing).

On the other hand, there are books, old and new, which always offer themselves to reading. Meanwhile they make understanding more difficult through various shrewd ways, therefore appearing even more attractive.

Finally, there is the personal aesthetic interest; the personal pretension in art and literature as well; the desire for *great variety, otherness and the fulfilment of life*.

Undoubtedly, this situation and these conditions point towards other methodology for the teacher, the school and literature teaching than that which has proved to be applicable for other situations.

In order to throw light on the approach of the textbook entitled *Comprehensive Reading of Literature*, I shall present a method of utilising the conditions mentioned before in teaching literature. I shall also show the possible role of a textbook.

## **Dialogue instead of “text analysis”**

### **The role of the textbook**

Let us take the role of the textbook as a starting point. It might seem that the textbook is the strongest and most enduring support of traditional training which goes along a one-way lane, avoiding the diversity surrounding and overwhelming us. What is the role of the textbook in our days?

The textbook contains that body of knowledge or education which must be “transferred” by the teacher and “acquired” by the pupil. We all know the way in which the textbook (the literature textbook too) “fulfils” this function, even today. Texts which present factual knowledge are dominant (these must be *repeated* in explanations and answers by pupils and the teacher alike); questions and exercises are only *additional* (they have a *controlling* function, their aim is to ask about things already learnt, to ensure that everything is properly committed to pupils’ memory so that they can bring out this information when necessary (during tests, exams). *Illustrations* also have a secondary role in the textbook. (They are a kind of background information to factual knowledge).

The *Comprehensive Reading of Literature* is obviously different: it uses a different language and therefore it presupposes a different teaching situation. *Literary texts* have an outstanding role in it. *Questions* and *exercises* have a more important role than they do in other textbooks and *illustrations* are not subordinated either. (There are two types of illustrations: pictures and texts.)

What is the essential difference between the approach of the two textbooks? (This is worth considering since people who observe the most obvious differences might ask questions like ‘Does this textbook not make the teacher’s task more difficult? It does not contain material that *must be learned* and can be used by the teacher without too much thinking and which can be then repeated by pupils at the exam. How should the teacher know how to interpret a work if the book does not contain this interpretation or it presents many, conflicting interpretations? Why are there so many questions and exercises? What is the use of illustrations with additional questions and exercises? How should the teacher be so well-informed in the field of the history of art and culture and history (there are a

lot of such data in the textbook)? Must the literature class (partly) take over the role of history and the history of art classes? How can these fields be harmonised within a single class, with a single teacher?')

### The view of textbooks on works

We must examine the approach, the literary approach of these textbooks and the way they face the challenges of our epoch directed towards the school and teaching literature.<sup>1</sup>

First of all let us consider, what do we think of when we hear the question 'What is literary work?' Is it the book on the shelf? Is it the poem in it? The poem which will be analysed at school? The novel we read every night? The play we see at the theatre? The work we hear at the concert or musical notes? The painting in the art gallery? The St Mary sculpture on the altar? The gothic cathedral where people have prayed for centuries? The film we saw at the movies yesterday? The performance in which we participated? We might think of any of these, more precisely, we think of this now and that later. We can give plenty of other examples too.

It is pretty clear that the examples mentioned above are very different. Let us see "the book on the shelf", then the one we are just reading. The mode of being of these "two works" is not the same, even if they are the same work written by the same author. The book on the shelf exists in its physical reality just as the poem contained by it. Nevertheless, the work we read or hear/see is no more on the pages of the book, its *way of being* differs from that of the printed letter. Although reading *presupposes* a written text, this is not the *essence* of it. The book which is being read *presupposes* a text-reader *relation* and the work which is performed implies a double relation. Obviously, such relations do not have a precise place in the world of physical reality. Similarly, objects in a museum, an antique vase perhaps, exists in another way when it is exhibited, no matter if there are any visitors or not, and in another way when they are the object of an amazed glance and in a different way when they are sold at an auction. The film we have just seen - we cannot speak about it immediately, but the next day its effect works within us,

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<sup>1</sup> This question is much more important than it might first seem. The overt or hidden approach of each literature class becomes a factor which decides the fate of literature. Let us imagine the following situation: as the teacher faces the class, they form a community because the text he has just read them overwhelms them. Nothing has been said yet about the work, however, everything is already decided. *The way* the teacher reads the text and what he will say about it is determined by his concept of literature. "When the man of letters reads a poem, says Richard Palmer, he has already interpreted his task and, in a broader sense, he has formed his opinion about it, when he says: 'This is a poem; in order to understand it I will do this and that.' His method determines the meaning of the object of interpretation." (Palmer, 1987:85)

compelling; us to speak about it, to interpret it - is not the same as the celluloid which is projected on the screen every night.

It is superfluous to give other examples. We have two types of experience concerning the mode of being of works of art. First we can say that the work of art is an *object*. Indeed, we can see the book on the table, the painting on the wall, the film in its case, etc. We can touch these objects. However, the embarrassing experience of *direct contact* with works and the effect of the work which consists of the process of enriching our being and changing our attitude does not fit within the above limited definition. Conceiving works of art as objective knowledge, as “epistemes” must not make us avoid our “hermeneutic”, personal interaction with them. The scientific approach of works of art has applied the former approach, the *objectivising* one. Let us think of the linguistic “embodiment” of this conception in common knowledge: ‘the work of art *expresses* the thoughts and experiences of the author’ (therefore it is some kind of document of these experiences), ‘the work of art *represents* (social) reality’ (thus it is a document), ‘the work of art is an object which carries eternal values; its aesthetic value distinguishes it from other objects’. (Therefore the work can be analysed, evaluated. Its value can be described by rules, etc.)

Our question is: how is the issue of the being of the work of art addressed at school? Which conception of the work of art is applied in the literature class? Furthermore: is our conception in line with the approach of textbooks and the syllabus? Does school allow us to think of *any* of the examples mentioned above when we teach literature or art?

We all know the answer to these questions. We know that literature teaching at school and textbooks only allow the approach where the work of art is object-like, a material reality which can be experienced empirically. ‘What was the lesson for today?’ ‘Tell me the analysis of the poem written by XY (on page n)’, ‘Take your anthology’, ‘Let’s analyse *the* poem’. These questions and exercises well-known in everyday teaching practice, well known because of old practices and old-fashioned textbooks subordinate the work of art to an objectivising scheme. In this conception the work of art is an object, a phenomenon outside us which can be approached by empirical experience. This conception appeared as a consequence of the 18th century scientific concept of experience; it became dominant in aesthetic thinking. This scientific view points out the task of the subject which comes in contact with the work: this was the rationalising of the aesthetic.

### **The dialogue of effect and reception**

‘Let us analyse the work!’ - this utterance, the after-effect of this epistemological approach can still be heard at literature classes. But let us consider what happens when we obey this request. There are many possibilities. The

textbook already contains the “analysis”: the teacher can read it aloud, explain it and ask the pupils to say it. However, the boredom which accompanies these “analyses”, the constraint that pupils must relate it, can persuade us that this operation has spoiled the “magic” of the work instead of increasing it. We have another possibility: to analyse the “poem”, in respective order. We find the circumstances of the origin of the work; we point out its place within the works of the poet, we speak about its stylistic marks and “divide” the text into structural units, analyse the “figures of speech” “used” by the poet, etc. Is this a better choice? Have we come closer to the work? If we are honest, we must admit that the conclusions of our experiences as teachers are not favourable in this case either. Why?

We receive an answer to this when we choose a third way, either consciously or because of some inner suggestion, when we can “let ourselves go” and let the effect of works, that is, our first impressions about them, be realised. This is an attraction, the starting point of which, cannot be “detected”: we realise that we are “carried away” only when some disturbing factor spoils our “empathy game” initiated by the work of art. When we cannot stop reading although we have important things to do, we “understand” what it means to be under the spell of a work. This experience is accompanied by another. We can observe that books do not attract us equally. It depends on a number of things what we like to read. One thing is sure: the works which we like, those which can address us always contain something appalling and mysterious. Works conceal their meaning to the extent they reveal it. They show us expectations concerning our understanding to the extent they conceal their meaning. *The work addresses us by asking.* Questions must be answered immediately so that there be “mutual understanding”. This happens in the case of “enjoying” reception. Let us think of instances when we “tune in” to the rhythm of a poem or a piece of music or we look at a painting for a long time and we “cannot take our eyes away from it”. We can conclude that the work does not let itself be “analysed”: it does not appear to us in order to be “analysed”. *The work of art demands a dialogue with the reader.*

You will probably ask me if I want to suggest that we have to develop such a “dialogic situation” during the literature class, or that this intimate relation between the work and the reader which is characteristic to the “delightful” reception can be applied in the multiple dialogic situation of the literature class too. You will also ask if the textbook can participate in this dialogue, without disturbing its intimacy.

Yes, this is what I want to say.

## What language do we use in our dialogue with the work?

### The problem of articulation

What does it mean that our real encounter with the work is *dialogic*?

We have already mentioned that this dialogic relation appears when we do not consider the work an *object* and do not aim at its rational *possession*. The work asks us to listen to what it says as a real conversationalist.

We must note that this rule must be observed in all conversations, not only in our conversations with certain works. *Conversations are successful only if the partners respect each other's opinion and they are not led by the wish to win (to "persuade"), but by the honest interest in the partner's opinion.* To have a dialogue with somebody means to listen to the *other*, to be attentive to the claim of the meaning of his words, says Gadamer. The result of a real conversation is always positive because the partners enrich their being by each other's opinion and the experience gained in the conversation. (Gadamer, 1984.) We all know that even an everyday chat is more than a mere exchange of information. A conversation implies more than the mere grammatical meaning of words. Therefore it employs not only our reason and linguistic competence but our intuition, insight and knowledge of mankind. Being together in a conversation which can be experienced through the attempt to understand each other carries us in a special, tacit dimension of meaning where the language of conversation acquires an "incantational function" as Polányi Mihály says, in addition to its informational function. (Cf. Nagy, 1994.)

It is beyond doubt that dialogic encounters with works are examples of such "incantational" speech-situations. Works of art enchant us with their mysterious way of speaking, concealing rather than revealing, as we have already stated. They attract us so that we gradually also tune in to this revealing-by-concealing manner of speaking. During our dialogic relation with the work the magic aura of art encompasses us too. The "incantational function" of such a dialogue prevails, more than in everyday language.

Nevertheless this leads to difficulties: how can we articulate this conversation, if the work itself does not address us in a conventional way? In other words: how does (how can we make) the language of this conversation speak?

In Gadamer's opinion every dialogue forms its *own* language which is used by the partners in their "speaking together". This statement might be extremely important for us. It reminds us that the language of the dialogue must be born in the dialogue itself, that is, during the encounter with the work. If we attempt to use "tried", conventional linguistic formulas (translation to everyday language, repetition of another analysis, the use of "scientific terms", etc.), we will never get anywhere.

How can we construct "our own language" in the dialogue with the work?

Let us think of the following situation: sometimes we feel a strong urge to *speak* about the powerful effect a work has on us, in other words, to “share the experience with others”. In these cases our spontaneous dialogic relation with the work tries to articulate itself. We understand now how difficult it is to answer this challenge. So many clichés come to our mind (“it was fantastic”, “wonderful”, “exceptional”), but we give up after a while. Though the *urge* to speak which sprang within us during our encounter with the work shows that the linguistic articulation of this relation is necessary and possible: the work itself requires it.<sup>2</sup> Learning the language of this dialogue calls for a communicational situation and exercise, like any other language.

We arrived now at the issue of the role of literature teaching in forming the skill of understanding literature.

### **The language of interrogation**

It is justified to speak about this because the (literary) work speaks to us about the language of interrogation. The *language of questions* has a specific role in school.

We feel the question asked by the work in a secretive but shocking way, always personal. The work of art asks us as the boundary situations of our life (our experiences of fear, despair, happiness, love, creation, death) do. These questions are always heart-stirring (this is why we can hardly speak about them although we consider it of vital importance).

However, typical questions at school are hardly “heart-stirring”. Our experiences tell us that they differ basically from the interrogative language of works of art. The school question (or “pedagogical question” as Gadamer calls it) aims at checking the knowledge preserved in memory and makes pupils repeat the (canonical) material stored in textbooks. Therefore these questions are really pseudo-questions, says Gadamer, “there is no real interrogator”. This means that these questions were not born of somebody’s interest. As their aim is to recall

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<sup>2</sup> The urge to exchange opinion about works of art within a community is a matter of cultural habit in my opinion. The “background information” of certain 19th century French, English and German novels reveals that talking about books, pieces of reading and music was one of the usual manners of speech in bourgeois circles (which meant a large number of people). (Hungarian novels written at the same time would prove the opposite of this.) Today films are perhaps which most often arouse the need for discussion; to what extent this need prevails as well as its level and its permanence depends on the circumstances and habits. I witnessed a conversation between 14-15 year old pupils of a commercial school at Sfintu Gheorghe about Dreyer’s famous silent film, *The Sufferings of Jeanne d’Arc* (1928). The discussion was led by their teacher who was an expert in films. The pupils’ responsiveness to the metaphorical structure and dramatic tension of this film constructed of close ups and cuttings as well as the linguistic level of their responses to the challenge of the questions on the language of a silent film which is strange in the age of action films persuades us that the skill of “reading” art and speaking about art (asking questions about it) can be taught and learnt by practicing.

knowledge, they close the way of thinking instead of opening it. "Real questions" (those raised by works) are the opposite of questions which are tailored to prefabricated answers; they open the way towards understanding.

Our question is: can we allow real questions free passage at school, can we replace pseudo-questions with the language of real questions at the literature class?

We have already mentioned that the questions asked by the work are "heart-stirring" because they refer to hidden dimensions of our life. This invisible sphere of life is really important for us, therefore we are interested in understanding and questioning it. We feel this *interest in questioning* when a work of art has an impression on us and the questions accumulating in us produce the need for talking about it (the experience-articulation need). However, this need often remains unfulfilled (partly because literary speech is missing from our habitual discourses in society). *Literature teaching at school has therefore the opportunity to build its strategies on the interest of questioning inherent in all of us.* The literature class is a good example because, using the interrogative language of works, it can prove the reason for existence of real questions at school.

We have to take into account something else, too: *works apply a specifically playful, enjoyable mode of questioning* (the more we are immersed in reading, the easier the questions appear). The literature class has to allow free passage to this playful, delighted questioning.

This must happen in a specific way. The literature class which allows the intellectual claim of the work of art - as a work of art! - to get a word in edgeways, becomes a *pluri-polar process of dialogue* which speaks on the questioning language of understanding. The teacher must adapt himself to a specific role of interpreter and question master. The usual rites of examination and repetition are replaced by an *interpretive discussion* led by the teacher *which places to the forefront real questions.* The "question master" participates in this game as somebody who asks questions. This means that the interpretive discussion is based on the experience of the encounter with the work of art instead of the repetition of an already existing analysis. Only this way can interpretation be live and authentic. We must take into account the differences between this pluri-polar dialogue and the communicational situation of "being alone with the book". As there are many of us in the class, questions come from many directions and in many ways. The teacher must gather and "moderate" these so that the different voices will not eliminate each other but provide the endless diversity of the dialogue.

How can we accomplish this extremely difficult task?

The gadamerian teaching concerning the *intellectual direction of interrogation* might help us (Ibidem: 254-259). The real questioning does not consist of accidental questions; the direction of the question is determined by the yet open, not yet understood thing. This is the starting point of our search. But we cannot get definitive answers this way, always new questions arise instead. The art

of interrogation is therefore “the art of further interrogation”, “the art of thinking”. Education appears in this perspective as the conscious forming of the process of further questioning. The work of the teacher who prepares the dialogue with the work is real creative work, “art”.

It is in fact usual for a teacher to get prepared for his class. However, this can be done in many ways. In the traditional sense preparing for the class means to repeat the material which will be taught and reading up on it, to enrich the explanation with new data. In a hermeneutic sense, it means to prepare the interpretive discussion, to define the direction of the interrogation, to ensure the coherence of interpretation.

How can the textbook help in such an interrogative discussion?

The language of presenting knowledge must be replaced by the language of *interrogative discussion*. The unusually great number of questions and exercises in the *Comprehensive Reading of Literature* serves this purpose. However, this is not enough for transforming the book into a partner in the exercise of dialogic understanding of works. (The so-called “programmed textbooks and workbooks also contain a lot of questions and exercises.) There are two conditions that must be fulfilled by a textbook in order to serve hermeneutic dialogue.

First, it has to speak a language which makes it a real partner in the dialogue with works. (In other words: instead of being a *means* of teaching, it must be the partner of the teacher and the pupils in the dialogic understanding.) The other condition is that it be accepted *as such*.

How is this possible?

The series of questions in such textbooks very often do not examine knowledge, neither do they serve the purpose of practicing a skill or “lead pupils” to the meaning of a work. (We must not look for such a final meaning, otherwise.) These questions must be *real questions*, that is, *the series of questions must apply the language of interrogation*. These questions show the intellectual direction of a possible conversation with the work without excluding other possibilities. On the contrary: their vocation is to reconcile the interests of partners and ensure a frame for cooperation.

They have more possibilities to fulfil their function: they either *give an example of interrogative conversation* (they show how to build up a discussion by following the intellectual direction of consecutive questions) or *start the conversation* (they place partners in a “conversational situation”, arise their interest) or they are *parallel with the discussion led by the teacher* (they do not interfere in the dialogue but show other possible ways of interpretation.)

There is a way in which this textbook must not be used: if the series of questions and exercises are approached from the perspective of “prefabricated

answers” and used for “examination”, then the book ceases to be a partner in conversation; it becomes again a “means”.<sup>3</sup>

### **The language of conversations searching for an answer**

Naturally, explanations cannot miss from the teaching based on a hermeneutic approach either. “Explanatory texts” remain an important component of the textbook, but their role is changed. The question is, how do these explanatory texts fit into the dialogue with works.

If we take seriously the role of partner which is offered us by the literature class conceived as a hermeneutic situation then the explanatory parts of the textbook can no more be considered texts “presenting factual knowledge” in the traditional sense. “Explaining something”, “providing an explanation” does not mean to give a great amount of new information; the explanation *throws light* on something which had not been clear. The explanation demands that we activate the *background* of the knowledge of our interlocutor so that the not yet understood things can fit into it and become understood. Therefore the main function of school explanations cannot be that of introducing completely new knowledge into the pupils’ memory. The explanations of the teacher will be more effective if we care to *call forth* those experiences and pieces of knowledge which will endow the new information with a meaning.<sup>4</sup>

Explanation is characterised by a specific *double search for background*: on the one hand, the partners try to make accessible the background of each other’s thoughts; on the other, they try to find out the background of each other’s thoughts in order to know what arguments and preliminary experiences they must employ for the sake of agreement. Every teacher knows that they must often “return” to a point where there is common understanding about the things which must be explained. (Cf. Fisch, 1996.)

The question arises: to what an extent can we “return” in discussing literary questions?

In order to answer this question let us remember our previous consideration that explanations are necessary when something becomes problematic for us. *Questions* disrupt the usual fabric of our background knowledge and compel us to rethink our considerations and restructure the horizon

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<sup>3</sup> Such a textbook is permanently “revised” reflexively, relying on the experiences acquired.

<sup>4</sup> It is worth considering those arguments of constructivist learning theory which claim that knowledge is always built into an already existing system of knowledge of the pupil. This means that we always have some (basic) knowledge or experience about the things we are going to learn and we include the new knowledge into the already existing “inner theories” or “world representation”. This conception of learning which is also supported by cognitive psychology assigns teaching the task of activating those background structures which receive new knowledge in a natural way rather than enforcing information on the memory which is opposed by this background. (Cf. Nahalka, 1997.)

of our knowledge for the sake of understanding. This conception-forming power of questions is most obvious when the issues raised by them affect us closely. The questions raised by literature are always linked to the *question of the meaning of life*. This is the broadest topic to which we can "go back". Every other literary question is built into it through the *issue of the nature of literature*. This topic makes teacher and pupil form a community, as they are both interested in answering it.

Those explanations which are dominated by the tension of this question are real because the question which motivates the search for an answer is real too. Therefore the teacher also learns through the explanation which aims at finding an answer. The *real explanation* excludes the traditional opposition between *teaching and learning* because the hermeneutic situation implies the process of *understanding through explaining* (that is, learning by teaching).

The issue of the nature of literature is present therefore, in an implicit or explicit way, at every literature class. It is important to acknowledge this not only because all knowledge can be included in this broad topic but also because all our knowledge about literature *originates* in it. Everybody (even the most uneducated pupil) has experiences concerning the nature of literature (these are primary reading experiences). This spontaneous knowledge as a "background" can not only be activated in teaching literature but, experiences show us, can also be developed on a considerably high level.

This is why the *Comprehensive Reading of Literature* begins with the question of the nature of literature (*What is literature?*) Naturally, this question does not get an answer (one of the consequences of dialogic understanding is that we can never get final answers). However, moving along the way of issues raised by this question, a great amount of hidden knowledge and experience concerning the phenomenon of literature and its approach moves into the sphere of consciousness. The explanatory texts of this textbook *represent* the accomplishment of the process of understanding literature, that is, the interpretation. They show the way how supposed relations and issues raised by the questions can be linguistically articulated.

We might ask if such a textbook does introduce any "new knowledge"; does it only activate "background information"?

Naturally, the hermeneutic textbook also contains "new knowledge". However, there is a substantial difference compared with the traditional textbook. The conversational situation (represented by the questions and exercises of the textbook) prepares and permanently keeps in stock that background which can easily receive new knowledge. In other words: this knowledge builds into a previously activated horizon of questions so that they throw light on something

hidden.<sup>5</sup> Therefore the explanation parts of the textbook do not *prescribe* but *help* the intention of understanding in teacher and pupils alike.<sup>6</sup>

It is the nature of literature and art which helps the textbook to carry out its task. The intuitive, deep understanding of art (which we have called the adequate manifestation of understanding art) is *enjoyable*. The book we read, the music we listen to, the film we watch, etc. *pleases us* while it raises the question of the meaning of our life; *it is a great pleasure for us* while it embarrasses us and overthrows the usual fabric of our opinion. The *game* is the adequate pedagogic version of this joyful learning. The playful questions and exercises which set the imagination free are important not only because they “make learning easier” but because they activate the readiness for brooding on something and animate imagination present in everybody. Without these faculties it would be impossible to understand art.

We might ask again: what should be the language of the conversation with the work?

Although we have reached the conclusion that questions maintain the tension of the literature class conversation, we must not forget that we ask questions in hope of an answer. We know that there are no final answers, nevertheless we must begin *searching* for an answer. We all know that answer-searching is more exciting than already knowing the answer, because in this way we are *interested* in the search, not to mention that we are able to get *our own* answers. They are either confirmed, completed or refuted by other answers (those

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<sup>5</sup> For example: we traditionally teach literary genres and works which embody them in separate lessons. This is the typical case of teaching new knowledge without any introduction (background information). The same happens when the pupil learns about nouns and verbs: he can find and identify words in a sample text which belong to these categories but he does not know what the function of these parts of speech is in our speech. When we speak we do not express our thoughts by verbs and nouns but we just “speak”, on the grounds of our previous linguistic competence. Similarly, we do not read literary genres but works which embody the previous knowledge of literary speech and apply the traditional ways of writing (called “rules of genres” in literary theory). We do not conceive these “rules” as unchanged principles in reading but sense them as marks of text patterns (e.g. we do not consider a text an elegy on account of the *rules* of elegy; the experience of other previously read elegies and non-elegies constitute the context of actual reading in which we can sense the “elegy-ness” of a poetic work.) Moreover, these “genre rules” are renewed from text to text and the skilled reader can sense these changes. This is why we must teach literary genres in connection with the literary text just read or build this knowledge into the (activated) background of pupils’ previous experiences in reading. The chapter on literary genres in the *Comprehensive Reading of Literature* activates the experiences concerning the multiplicity of text formation and the various attitudes the different texts elicit. Then it presents the tradition of the theory of genres of European literature, based on examples taken from ancient Greek literature which are still valid patterns for writing and reception.

<sup>6</sup> The importance of this is obvious in a textbook which deals with the beginnings of literature. Questions, exercises and explanations in this textbook often place the reader in situations in which he must decide the distance in time between our days and the text and must be able to imagine the situation which is presented by the text and which has therefore common features with basic situations experienced by all of us.

of the textbook or of literary men) but they create a live dialogue. The participants of such a dialogue become “enriched in their lives”.

### **The change of role of conceptual language**

What is then the language of this answer-searching dialogue?

We have already mentioned the hermeneutic recognition that the real conversation forms its own, most appropriate language. Therefore everybody who is prompted by the live effect of works to converse (in written or spoken form) realises that everyday language used for exchange of information cannot be the language of this conversation (in other words: we cannot speak about works on a “smattering of English”. Neither is the dry factual language of science adequate.

Let us commence again with a well-known phenomenon. We often experience that it is very difficult to speak about a work which has a great effect on us. Even if we succeed, the first words resemble stuttering rather than an “analysis” worthy of a work of art.<sup>7</sup> However, it is exactly this seemingly negative experience which can become the positive starting point of our endeavour to reach our utmost aim, educating people skilled in literary discourse, able to speak and write about literature.<sup>8</sup> Therefore it is important for us to pass over the inhibitions brought about by the authority of the interpretations of a knowledge-centered textbook. It is useful to understand that the authority of “glib talk” in school discourse is not necessarily positive. The language whose energies are spent for the *repetition* and promotion of some “official” opinion instead of consideration is really a power strategy and the people who speak this language are means of applying this power strategy. The real conversation with the work does not use this “glib talk”; this language - and the dialogic relation - must be *created*; as any other creation, it requires time, patience, concern and care. If we arrived at the point of stuttering and breaking off, this means that we are on the right road: there is a need for real speech.

But we ask again, ‘How should we speak?’

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<sup>7</sup> This is how the work of art makes us realise the difference between *speech* and *chatter*. *Speech* is always for the sake of “being together”, says Heidegger. In other words: speech links together partners in a dialogue, by understanding and agreement. If speech repeats only and passes on something already told, without a feed-back to the understanding of that being to which it refers, it becomes *chatter*. Baseless, unfounded chatter conceals that which must be understood and exempts us from the task of adequate understanding. (Cf. Heidegger, 1989). Therefore the teacher who assumes the task of understanding and making somebody understand something, must not *chat*. He must *speak* with the text and the pupils, in the form of dialogue.

<sup>8</sup> Gadamer calls our attention to negative experiences which are genuine experiences in spite of appearances. The essence of experience is that it crosses one of our expectations and therefore compels us to change our minds. Gaining experience means that we “desist from something we believe in unquestioningly” and therefore gain a new discretion. (Gadamer, op. cit.)

The literary theory of our century worked out an elegant conceptual language for a high-level speech about literature. This language can be of great help in solving our problem. The great advantage of this language is not only that it offers euphonic and precise concepts for speech about literature but also that it provides us with *guidelines* for the competent approach of works of art.

Nevertheless, this advantage might be a drawback in our attempt for the linguistic articulation of the dialogue with the work. We must not forget that the system of concepts devised by modernist literary studies served the extreme objectivising concept of the work of art. (As we all know, its elaboration has been prompted by the endeavour to do the most perfect possible literary analysis.) We feel the drawbacks of this concept when we can see a literary work “in pieces”, the pieces not “put again in their place”. Although the language used for this operation is sharp and precise, it is unfamiliar. It sounds like the clinking of scissors and scalpels.

Our aim is not a cold analysis but the linguistic deepening of our personal encounter with the work. We require an adequate language for this, as we have already mentioned.

Teachers can experience that knowledge taught for the sake of memorising and reproduction which always remains “in the void”. Real, interior knowledge differs from “floating” knowledge in that it is rooted in experience and it is ready for grounding new experiences, that is, for using them in practice. (The literature class which teaches the characteristics of the genre of epigram linked to the punch of an epigram by Pannoni<sup>us</sup> is much more successful than that which teaches it separately, in a definition. The humour and irony of the punch can be appreciated much more if we prepare the reception by tuning into the world of Pannoni<sup>us</sup> 500 years ago - as a student studying abroad he is estranged by his homeland when he comes back and answers in these poems the questions posed by life.)

Attaining knowledge and applying it are not two different acts in learning conceived as a hermeneutic situation. Therefore it is not good to make literary works a means and an illustration of literary theory and other knowledge. On the contrary: the already existing knowledge (which is introduced again) must be activated and put in the service of comprehensive reading. (For example: let us suppose that a pupil learns the definition of the metaphor and can count the metaphors in a text. This does not imply, however, that he understands the work better, because his knowledge is *general*, it does not have an experimental basis and remains meaningless if it cannot be applied to the text. However, application itself is meaningless if it is confined to finding the metaphors in a text, based on the definition. This operation is meaningful if it fulfils the requirements of the text by considering a poetic description as metaphor.)

This raises an issue regarding the use of concepts on the literature class. The scientific use of concepts is characterised by its univocality. (Modernist

literary theory considers the precision and unambiguous nature of concepts, very important.) Our question is if we can expect that the use of concepts in literary interpretation at school be traditionally precise, especially if we accept that every conversation forms its own language.

We must remember one of our observations regarding the nature of the language created in the dialogue. Words in a “real dialogue” do not mean only themselves but they also assume the specific aura of the relation between the interlocutors: thus the language gains an “incantational function”. Considering this we cannot think that this incantational function does not work in the dialogue between the work and its reader. On the contrary: the experiences of the teacher show that even the most precise concepts of literary theory may assume an “incantational function” in this conversation. Our tuning into the concealing-revealing language of the work of art means that the language spoken by us does not try to *grasp* some meaning of the work which can be fixed but, according to the nature of the work of art, it attempts to *refer* to the unspeakable and inconceivable. The language of interpretation must make possible our articulated presence in the aesthetic dimension offered by the work of art. In other words: the function of the language of interpretation is not referential but “incantational” and its rules of game are prescribed by the poetically structured language of the work. This poetically formed language represents the expectations of the work for the reader to actively respond to its aesthetic challenges. The (permanently recreated) dialogic language of interpretation is one of the embodiments of this response.

Most of the concepts devised by modern literary theory can easily be adapted to the language of the dialogic approach of works suggested by the hermeneutic view. However, we must know the paradigm in the horizon of which we are. (As we have already stated, the implicit or explicit approach of the reception decides the mode of being for the work.)

We must stress that switching over to the “incantational” language of interpretation cannot mean the use of shallow discourses or linguistic imprecisions. On the contrary, this game requires preparation on the part of the teacher, first of all, but also that of the pupils as well.<sup>9</sup> The effort made is not painstaking because it does not bear the burden of any prescription. *Creation* is the result of this effort

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<sup>9</sup> We must underline - in agreement with the concept of understanding and learning of constructivism - that, in spite of the traditional concept, the development of skills cannot be separated from or opposed to the development of knowledge. In other words: we cannot speak about “gaining knowledge” and “acquiring skills” separately. Knowledge is “in the void” without the experiences which founded it and skills cannot develop without previous knowledge, a background basis which can include and “control” them. Zoltán Nahalka writes, “...a skill is nothing else than the high-level structuring of a field of knowledge, its appropriateness for cognitive or objective action. Knowledge and skills cannot be separated, they cannot be considered separate entities: knowledge is the ‘material’ while the skill is the high-level structuring of this ‘material’.” (Nahalka, 1997, p.14.)

as it is a freely assumed display of strength for the success of the dialogue; a new language, a new world is born in every successful dialogue.

If teachers and pupils remain readers in the literature class, their being is enriched.

The *Comprehensive Reading of Literature* helps on this “practice of language” by many exercises, written and oral, differentiated according to genres (note, summary, commentary, miniessay) and many interpretations of texts placed in frames. These are *intertexts* literary works which show that texts live and gain meaning in their relation to other texts. The interpretive tradition becomes part of the life of works (the way we understand Berzsenyi is influenced unobserved by the way he was interpreted during the centuries and the interpretations which were lasting), therefore it is advisory to include this tradition in the dialogue at the literature class. (It is not the same if we are conscious or not of the interpretations through which we get into contact with the works read.)

The literary history chapters of the *Comprehensive Reading of Literature* are preceded by a chapter entitled *Understanding and Interpretation*. This unit does not simply replace the literary theory chapter which is included in the curricula but which has been missing from the textbooks for a long time now.) It has a more “hermeneutic” role: its task is to *initiate* (“interpret to”, tune into) the comprehensive, dialogic dimension of reading and to start speaking the language of interrogation and answering. This chapter introduces many traditional and modern hermeneutic concepts. It does this in conversational situation, related to reading issues.

The question arises: is it not anachronistic today to speak about *code, aesthetic behaviour, connotation, fiction, the world of the work of art, etc?*

We have just pointed out that these concepts fulfil different roles depending on the paradigm in the horizon of which they come to life. Experiences show that the dialogic approach cannot renounce the *points of view* of modernist interpretive ways which drew attention to the form of works of art.<sup>10</sup> However, the change of approach implies changes in the mode of being: in the speech situation corresponding to the understanding type of reading, the form is not the *subject* of interpretation (which should be caught in the net of conceptual language) but the *rules of the game* proposed by the work for the dialogic reception, which must be accepted for the sake of the game. Furthermore: the dialogic concept makes

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<sup>10</sup> The experts of modern hermeneutics confirm this too: Ricoeur says that the ideal solution for interpretation would be if structuralist analysis would be enframed by existential interpretation. (Cf. Ricoeur, 1976, 1995). Gadamer stresses that in spite of the receptor’s creative participation the interpretation cannot be arbitrary: it is guided by the requirements embodied in the form of the text (Cf. Gadamer). Jauss proves in one of his studies that the stage of the first impression in the process of reading (the aesthetic reading) is followed by the so-called retrospectively interpretive reading. The “techniques” of this tendency resemble the interpretive strategies consciously devised by structuralist interpretation. (Cf. Jauss, 1981).

necessary the cancelling of structuralist ahistoricity and the *rehabilitation of the historical point of view*.

## **Distances and bridges in time**

### **Another literary history**

Traditional high-school textbooks were textbooks of literary history solely, so that even today we can hardly think about a curricula other than “the history of Hungarian literature from the beginning until now”, although the literary history approach of the last century on which the tradition of textbooks was based is highly anachronistic. It is enough to consider that all over the world new trends of literary theory flourished and declined (New Criticism, Structuralism, Literary Semiotics, Formalism, Phenomenology) which gave up searching writers’ autobiography, arranging events of literary history in chronologic order, periodising literature and dealing with other “extra-literary” issues so that they could focus solely on “literature” as such and the work of art.<sup>11</sup> The principles and results of research centred on the work of art entered school curricula as well. The *explication du texte* method had an important role in French education from the beginning of the century and it had a refreshing effect on Hungarian literature teaching from the beginning of the 1980s, at least at the level of textbooks.<sup>12</sup> (See Kecskés András, Boda Edit, *Tengertánc*, which was written as an experimental textbook, the really interesting elementary school textbooks or the high-school textbooks at the beginning of the 1980s which led to the “textbook-war”.) As the principle of the immanence of work entered literature teaching, positivist historical views faded, ahistoricity took their place.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> E.D.Hirsch, American Professor claims in one of his studies that the immanent approach of literature owes its success to the fact that its methods of interpretation were widely used in schools. (Cf. Hirsch, 1987).

<sup>12</sup> We did not have the opportunity to profit from the pedagogic and didactic proceeds of this. According to my observations these views begin to enter the teaching of Romanian literature now, at the end of the 1990s, with the appearance of alternative textbooks. However, there is no sign of this in Hungarian literature textbooks in Romania, the issue of alternative curricula and textbooks lags far behind that of Romanian ones. It is behind the scenes, although modern trends have long passed us, the world lives in the age of the postmodern.

<sup>13</sup> A part of the textbooks in Hungary maintained the historical view besides the modern scientific ones. (See the high-school textbooks mentioned above.) This had a negative consequence: the curricula became overcrowded. Veronika Spira presented a thorough analysis of the situation at the First Conference of Hungarian Literature Teachers (Budapest, November 1997). She said that the swelling of the curricula is due to the softening of the ideological pressure: in the 1960s works and writers excluded in the time of proletcult could be included and the results of modern literary theory were also taken into account in the 1980s.

Beginning with the 1970s there was a view in literary studies which brought back the dimension of historicity in the study of literature, but in a new way. This is *literary hermeneutics*. Hans Robert Jauss published a study in 1967 about the anomalies of traditional literary history and the need for a new historical conscience. (Cf. in Hungarian Jauss, 1980). Jauss started from the fact that traditional literary history research kept out of the *historical dimension* because the documents, circumstances of the origin of works, authors' biographies, facts, data, etc. *promoted a view outside the literary work*, whereas the *live historical being* of literature is not assured by the research of these data but the permanently renewing process of their reception. In other words: works live on if there is somebody to read them. In this conception the history of literature is not the strict chronological order of "literary facts" but the process of a sometimes interrupted and renewing reception of works.

Jauss was merciless with the (common) contradictions of view of Marxist aesthetics and formalist schools. He pointed out the common feature of these trends, namely, that they deprived the literary phenomenon of the dimension of effect and reception, the very dimension which assures the aesthetic nature of the work. Marxist aesthetics considered the representation of the society the most important function of literature and therefore the reader - as well as the writer - was viewed as the representative of a social strata. The only thing that mattered was if he was able or not to understand "correctly" "the exposure of the social reality" (the ideological connotation of the work). The receiver did not have an important role in formalist trends either. In this conception the task of the reader, the *subject* facing the artistic *object*, is to discover the methods of the artistic form, following the directions of the text. Jauss reminds us that the *work* speaks to the *reader* first of all, but neither the positivist, nor the Marxist and formalist trends let him play his role of aesthetic receptor.<sup>14</sup>

Jauss made the experts of literary studies realise the disunited nature of their role: a researcher who deals only with objective, controllable documents which can be placed in causal order is forced to "aesthetic self-restraint". The aesthetic effect of works is uninteresting from his point of view, moreover, it is disturbing "subjective issue" which endangers objectivity. Therefore a deep gap appeared between the "expert" and "reader" self. The concept of literature is an *aesthetic value-concept* in our days. However, the expert who advocates the positivist objectivity principle must put aside this aspect of his natural value-consciousness during his research so that he can avoid even the suspicion of subjectivity.

We can easily recognise in this posture of men of letters criticised by Jauss the contradictions which render more difficult the work of the teacher even

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<sup>14</sup> Therefore, thirty years after Jauss' study it would be anachronistic if aesthetics promoting the immanence of the work of art followed the ideological-Marxist tradition in teaching literature.

today. At school where the traditional historical view dominates, the teacher is compelled to “aesthetic self-restraint” as his task is to teach pupils the data of literary history and the text interpretations contained by the textbook while there is no time for the immediate encounter with the work. Therefore the teacher lives through the role crisis of the man of letters because the teacher must hand down “knowledge” and “develop skills” - therefore he is not a *reader*, but “only” a teacher. The situation of the teacher who is an advocate of the principle of immanence of the work of art has a similarly difficult task because he must observe the methodological procedures and use the conceptual language devised by scientific research for the analysis of works.

Jauss’ study had a mobilising effect not only because it criticised an outdated approach and scientific method but because he pointed to the possibility of surpassing the imbalance caused by them. The Man of Letters can regain the harmony of his role of expert and reader if he can accept his own value-consciousness, aesthetic expectations and the natural values of his age. The study proposes the application of historicism without depriving the receptor of the pleasure of reading. Moreover, it uses the liberated energies to bridge the distances in time which separate us from the work.

We must add that this is interesting for us from the point of view of the teacher and the situation of teaching literature.

### **The consciousness of the history of influence**

How can the two selves of the teacher (that of pedagogue and reader) be harmonised in teaching literature? How does this relate to the application of the principle of hermeneutic historicism?

We have already obtained an answer to the first question when we considered the applicability of the dialogic approach of works at school. The second question is closely connected to the first one and requires the clearing up of the concept of the “*consciousness of the history of influence*”.

Gadamer says that the consciousness of the history of influence is, “on the one hand, the consciousness induced and determined by history; on the other hand it is the consciousness of this induction and determination”. (Gadamer, op. cit. p.15.) Translating this to the hermeneutic situation of the literature teacher, it means that as a receptor he himself is part of the process (and is defined by it) during which the work he tries to interpret still exists as a work of art. (In other words: we understand the work as a situation of reception and the interpretive tradition “prescribes” us.) Beyond that the literature teacher reflects upon his situation as receiver and the interpretive tradition in the horizon of which he is. (In other words: he can measure not only the historical distance between our world and the “original” world of the work but also the community which, as an integral part of the same process, can nevertheless link the two worlds.) The ability to

judge our connection with the work and the unfamiliarity which separates us from it, is very important. Without this we cannot *bridge* the distance.

We have experienced that old texts in general, pose greater difficulties in understanding than those which are close to us in time. This issue becomes more obvious in teaching literature because it comes to light immediately that the explanation of words and the presentation of the circumstances of the work's origin is not enough for "coming close" to a work.

How should we proceed then? How can old texts be brought close to teenagers when they try even the patience of experts? How can we persuade pupils in the 9th form that the *Halotti beszéd (Funeral Orature)* and the *Ómagyar Máriasiralom (Old Hungarian Lament of Virgin Mary)* are beautiful?

Let us consider the obstacles which compelled us to measure the distance which must be bridged.

While reflecting on this we can observe that the *process of bridging is always based on our realisation of the distance*. Realising the linguistic distance invites us to search for the basis of understanding the text: the meaning of words and constructions. All that proves to be understandable in the text from 800 years' distance, links us with those who lived then and compels us to proceed in understanding. Becoming absorbed in the text brings us to exceed grammatic comparisons. As the *sounding form* of the text becomes known to us, we can imagine the situation of the people who talked like that *then* or heard *this way* what we hear *that way*. We understand what did they feel *then*, at the grave, when they experienced the closeness of death and the sentences of the preaching articulated their consternation into brooding. The sounding form can be compared with the written form and this draws our attention to the problem of *writing*. We can let our imagination take flight: we must understand the situation of the literate man who was not restricted by any rules of orthography but whose "freedom" was a great burden and responsibility because he had to *create* the language of written Hungarian, almost from nothing, but worthy of the well-known Latin culture.

We understand it from *our own experience* (when we get used to the rhythm of the text, the alliterations and other "tricks" of forming the text) that these works are not simply the written variants of sounding texts but they were born as *writing*. Writing (the language worked out) is another language as compared to spoken language: the language of culture, the language of literature.

We cannot learn from a "book" or acquire as external knowledge the importance of the fact that the 12-13th century Men of Letters founded the Hungarian literary language. If somebody becomes absorbed in these old texts and discovers in them the finely worked and therefore elevated wisdom about the serious questions of life and death and the consolation addressed to *fellow creatures* then he becomes convinced of the power of this language; that it is

capable of addressing people even after hundreds of years and can unite in a community those who are long dead and those who are about to be born.<sup>15</sup>

Will the application of the principle of the history of influence not make the task of the professor of literature too difficult? Does the hermeneutic literature teaching not set him tasks which concern the history professor or the art historian?

If we think of what we said about the use of the principle of dialogue and the necessity of activating background information then we admit that this does not threaten us. For if our encounter with the text is a real dialogue, then the text will "tell" us what historical, historicultural, history of language etc. background information we can activate, first for *ourselves* and then in pupils' minds. Of course, there could be background information acquired during the history class, but this does not mean that the Hungarian teacher must become a History teacher. However, being a Literature teacher does not mean that we have nothing to do with history. On the contrary: we are related to it; it is our concern just as our life is, as we are part of both of them.

The activation of background information is necessary also because the reading of a literary text compels us to enter the dialogue "bag and baggage", with the whole world of our knowledge and experience. If the teacher and the pupils participate as *readers* in the communicative situation of the literature class, this means that they become interested in the activation of background information which seems to be a constraint in other circumstances. The common role of *reader* moulds the participants into a *community* in the play-field of the literature class.<sup>16</sup>

The series of questions and exercises, the issues raised, the "window texts" of the literary history chapters of the *Comprehensive Reading of Literature* as well as the attached anthology offer help for this dialogic encounter containing a historical dimension as well.

### What is the use of the chronologic order?

Let there be no mistake, we must underline here that the *primary* task of the literature class is not to teach the chronology of literary facts and events, but to train pupils for comprehensive reading. However, you need a refined ability of "measuring distance" with comprehensive reading. Forming this ability, as any

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<sup>15</sup> We must stress again along with Gadamer that tradition itself which must be understood helps us in bridging the distance between us and that which must be understood, by its mediating movement. "Understanding itself must be imagined less as the act of subjectivity than finding ourselves in an event of tradition where there is incessant communication between past and present."

<sup>16</sup> The difference between the situation of the teacher and the pupil also manifests itself mainly at this point. The teacher should know better what manuals and lexicons to use in order to complete the missing but necessary knowledge. On the other hand, and this is most important, he must *reflect* on the distance which separates us from the text. It will be his task to give an impulse and an example of measuring this distance and activating the background necessary for it.

other ability, is only possible by often repeated experience. This is why the *historical point of view* is extremely important in *teaching literature*, because the historic sense cannot be operated in an ahistoric curricula.<sup>17</sup>

The question arises again: is the observance of the chronologic order necessary for this?

From the hermeneutic point of view we might answer that it is *not really necessary*. For "outside school" the reader does not encounter literary works in the order of their appearance, but "at random". It is to be feared that the chronologic order awakes the bad memory of the former conception of literature which we have just called an anachronistic practice. On the other hand, the hermeneutic conception of teaching literature considers important the view that the literature class must not exclude the possibility of reading with pleasure. On the contrary, it should *create* this possibility, to the greatest possible extent and in the greatest variety possible.

However, this time we are compelled to emphasize a *didactic* perspective, exactly in the interests of the hermeneutic conception. We acknowledged that one of the most difficult tasks of the reader is to use the consciousness of the history of influence, and we had also understood that this is indispensable for the understanding type of reading. "Assessing the distance", hearing what the text told in its age and separating that which tells us today requires indeed a large "basis of background knowledge" and, what is even more important, the ability of easily handling this basis, arranging knowledge and quickly incorporating new knowledge. We must be able to "tune" to this mode of understanding, therefore the permanent collaboration between teacher and textbook is necessary, and, as we shall see, *some kind of observance of the chronologic order*.

First we must stress that the fact that this is a difficult task for a reader does not mean that this task is too "difficult" and it does not suit pupils' "characteristics of their age-group." On the contrary! It is exactly this mode of reading which appears during reading, according to the "characteristics of the age-group": discovering the "difference" in the text as compared to our world. Whether we teach this mode of reading or not, spontaneous reading always functions this way.<sup>18</sup> Therefore teaching literature does not mean that we must teach the children some scientific, inaccessible "new method of analysis", but that we should strengthen and make conscious that which is experienced by them in the act of reading. (The operation of the consciousness of the history of influence seems

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<sup>17</sup> We are not educated in literature if we can tell when Bálint Balassi was born or when he died, but only when we can read his poems with pleasure. However, in order to read them with pleasure, we must know "when was he born" and, moreover, we must be able to imagine ourselves somehow in that epoch, living among those people for whom the poetry of Balassi was completely new, a "first poetry".

<sup>18</sup> A historical novel is read with pleasure by a child only if he is able to realise that there is a *temporal distance* between the events taking place in the novel and the events of his life. The novel itself gives the necessary linguistic support for this.

difficult less so because it is a task which surpasses pupils' abilities, but rather because it has no traditions in the teaching of literature.)

Another delicate question arises at this point which we must at least tangentially mention: should we teach writers' biographies in the literature class?

Literary theories which propagate the immanence of literary works put a ban on this section of literature as something which is "not part of literary work". It is "outside" and therefore not worthy of the attention of the interpreter. This was an important step taken in order that the practice of analysis could avoid the "heresy of intentionality", that is, the mistake of tracing back the effect of the poetic work to the biography of the writer, the experience of the poet and the intention of "expression" originating in it.<sup>19</sup> Those who took seriously the principles of modern trends of literary analysis, seemingly made up doubly on the roundabouts what was lost on the swings, because the literary analyses concentrated on the form of the work instead of the writer's biography.

However, the teaching of literature based on the hermeneutic view restores the dignity of the author, on account of the principle of dialogue, and this is indeed necessary, as we will see. The supposition that *somebody talks to somebody* always contributes towards the understanding of a work of art.<sup>20</sup> It is indeed important that this preliminary expectation works in the process of reading. This does not mean, of course, that we must think of the writer telling his life-story or one of his experiences in his work, or the thoughts he was considering. Rather, the work bears the marks of an act of forming a text (creating), a creation in which we participate through reading. Somebody (the author) created something, a work, in which there is encoded the intention of offering others as well the game of creation: everybody, who wishes to take part in the joy of creation. We have all experienced what does it mean if we accept this call inherent in the work: we become more and somehow different than we usually are, when we read. We are also (re)-creators, we answer the call of the Creator and therefore our life gains a new dimension.

We must also underline that this call does not come from an unreal sphere but from "flesh and blood" *people*. The author does not create his work for a faceless posterity but his fellow-creatures for whom he is also real, personal. (As it is well known, there was a direct communicational relation between the author and

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<sup>19</sup> This tradition is still alive in our practice of teaching literature. Let us think of "analyses" based on thesis sentences like "the poet wanted to say", "the poet expressed his experience", "the poet told this or that event of his life".

<sup>20</sup> For that matter, it is an important condition of the understanding of *any* text that we can imagine the speech situation in which the given text can have a meaning. If you are a witness of the conversation of two people and want to understand what they tell each other you must make an effort to understand their expectations for each other and the intention which motivated them; when you read a scientific text, my understanding "contains" the knowledge that somebody (the scientist) considered it important to inform the experts of the given field about the meaning of the text.

his audience until the age of printing.) In order to enter this creative communicational relation we must be able to imagine the original, live medium of communication: the expectations of the former audience which were answered by the author's creation of his work. (We formulated this before such as "we must be able to imagine what the work told in its own age", "how could it speak to those readers to whom it was originally written".) In this sense it is important to know the biography: it helps our *imagination* to place the work which we approach with an intention of understanding in a live dialogic situation.<sup>21</sup>

Indeed, we must understand the author as well. Not as though his life would be "mirrored" in the work, but as though his life would be rewritten in the dimension of creation and therefore it is in contact - in the dimension of re-creation - with our life. As this dimension of creation is really a *playfield*, the literature class can become the scene of a creative game. The work, the receptor as well as the author has a place and role in this playing field. We should only be careful not to swing to the other extreme through the "rehabilitation" of the author's biography, not to read the work again for the sake of the biography and to consider the work the "representation" of this biography. For life summoned by us by our imagination through reading, does not become accessible for us in a direct, empirical experience but in a dimension beyond reality: in the dimension by which our life became more than it had been in the world of bare realities.

The hermeneutic knowledge of the biography is therefore a part of asserting the consciousness of the history of influence: it helps us to assess the distance between us and the original world (playfield) of the work so that we should bridge this distance.

We might ask again: Why is chronological order needed?

We must underline again: chronological order is not *absolutely necessary* in teaching literature, but in a sense it might be very useful, even necessary.

We have seen that the greatest responsibility for a teacher is to enforce the consciousness of the history of influence. Here it becomes clear how important it is for a teacher to prepare for his class, to prepare that which becomes a *game* at the class.<sup>22</sup> One of the most important stakes of this game is the *proper assessment of distances*. Assessing the distance is always a matter of comparing. Relating one thing to another implies some kind of "measure" which serves as a conventional basis for comparison. Thus the "conventional basis" of the history of influence is nothing else but the *chronology of the occurrence of literary events and issues*

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<sup>21</sup> The *Comprehensive Reading of Literature* tries to assure this indirectness of the role of the author by placing the sketches of biography in the anthology instead of the text and by offering more exercises concerning the "recreation" of the life of the author.

<sup>22</sup> Such education tries the teacher's creative power. If he wishes the class to be worth of the work of art, his questions and explanations *must suit the intellectual level of the work*. It is not indifferent therefore how does he organise the class, how coherent it will be, a *real work* formed by questions, explanations and conversations.

which, just as the measure of length and mass is known by everyone. Everybody must be able to recall them to relate to it all that which is part of human time and history.<sup>23</sup>

As any other base of comparison or unit of measurement, the chronologic order of events must be kept in mind, interiorised, so that it can be recalled any time. We need to practice this. However, this practice does not mean that the measure must be memorised for its own sake but it is realised in *comparisons*. Similarly: it is not worth learning the chronologic order of literary events for its own sake, but it is absolutely necessary for the sake of comparison, the *undisturbed working of the consciousness of the history of influence*.<sup>24</sup>

This is why the *Comprehensive Reading of Literature* keeps the chronological order, in a certain hermeneutic sense and encourages the practice of historical *comparison* by many questions and “problem-raising” exercises. Its chapters on literary history wish to lead us to the view that the historical perspective must be taken into account because we ourselves live in history, because what we see is seen by millions of ancestors.<sup>25</sup>

### Do we need the intertext of Hungarian Literature in teaching?

We must speak here about the issue of the so-called “world literature context” and “attendant art parallels”. Both issues are well-known from traditional literature teaching and caused many debates in connection with the issue of teaching world literature as a separate subject<sup>26</sup> and the keyword of the so-called “complex aesthetic education” put into circulation in the 1970s.<sup>27</sup>

The *Comprehensive Understanding of Literature* places Hungarian Literature in the context of “world literature” and the attendant arts, as we can see from the textbook.

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<sup>23</sup> Historical reading, as we have stated, automatically starts to function in reading. For example, if we read an antique, renaissance or 18th century poem, we perceive the “oldness” of the texts. However, we must be able to assess the differences in distances and the chronological relation of texts to one another, so that our understanding shall be adequate to the text.

<sup>24</sup> Heidegger writes in *Time and Being* that literary history in a hermeneutic sense is the history of the problematics of literature. (Cf. Heidegger, 1989.)

<sup>25</sup> In other words: the *Comprehensive Reading of Literature* wishes to be a literary history at school which could transform Balassi, Zrínyi, Csokonai as well as Petöfi, Ady and Pilinszky into *pieces of reading*.

<sup>26</sup> The “philology” classes and the teacher training classes had the privilege of learning the history of world literature as a separate subject (one hour a week), for two years.

<sup>27</sup> The expression “debate” must always be understood in a euphemistic sense in our country, because hardly were there public possibilities for debate. We must rather think of dissatisfaction and “gumblung” expressed during private discussions.

This might create the illusion that this textbook enters the discourse of the debates mentioned in the first paragraph, albeit this is something else. I would like to throw light on this.

### **The context of world literature**

First of all we must make clear what is the “context of world literature” in this connection?

In the view of our present World Literature textbooks “world literature” appears as the history of representative (canonised) works and of related literary events (trends, writers’ biographies, etc.) This way this subject is no more than a supplement of the Hungarian Literature syllabus. As a supplement it is really useful as it enlarges pupils knowledge of literature, providing them with information which is “part of the general culture”. However, what is useful on the one hand, raises doubts on the other. The greatest problem is the overloading of the syllabus. The syllabus of Hungarian Literature is “enormous” (thank God, we could nevertheless add), so that it is a thoughtless maximalism to add world literature to it. Moreover, the large quantity of knowledge does not make possible that this supplementation should have a meaning, that of throwing light on the relations between Hungarian literature and its “world literature background”. It is most interesting that an objection could be raised exactly at the point of the possibility of revealing relations between Hungarian literature and world literature. Practising Hungarian Literature teachers call our attention to the fact that the disadvantage of Hungarian literature as compared to world literature becomes visible in the context of world literature and this could lead to confusions in the self-evaluation of the Hungarian youth who anyway do not have too much self-confidence.

I would like to point out how these contradictions can be solved in the hermeneutic teaching of literature.

First, we must answer the question: what is the “*background of world literature*” in a hermeneutic sense?

There is a public concept of “world literature rank” works, originating in Goethe’s concept, that important works of a lasting value belong to world literature. Without dealing with the theoretical issues of canonisation (e.g. how can it be decided which works are of “world literature rank” and who can decide it, etc.) let us stick to this well-known concept of world literature. However, we must add immediately that the primary question for us is: *what works are valuable for us, readers?* Our answer to this question distinguishes two issues which merge and cover up each other. This answer shows that there are two ways in which works get the attribute of “first rank” in our opinion: if the work is accompanied from the first by such information (let us think of references of literary history handbooks, appreciatory remarks, blurbs, the name of the writer or the fact that the work is

textbook material) or if we get convinced by it by the experience of reading. (We cannot mention now the interactions, confluences and divisions of these two ways.)

We are interested now in the second way. From a hermeneutic perspective “works of rank” are those which provide us with an *aesthetic experience* and *can address the present-day readers* and therefore we read them with pleasure. A delicate question arises at this point. Many works which are considered “works of rank” by textbooks and handbooks are seldom read by people (Homer’s works, *The Divine Comedy*, *Faust*, to mention just a few).

If we approach this problem with the intention of solving it, then, I think, we must not start from the question of what are those qualities of readers the *lack* of which led to this unfortunate state. Rather we should ask what are those qualities which allow these works to have a live influence even today. (We cannot deny that they exercise an influence even if on a more restricted audience than bestsellers do.)

Borges has an interesting account of how the text itself taught him of a delightful reading of *The Divine Comedy*. (Cf. Borges, 1994). He always took with him the bilingual edition of Dante’s work to his long tram travel between his home and workplace. He read the English translation and excerpts from the Italian version alternately. After a while he realised that he did not need the translation, because it was a pleasure to read the original text. A bit of Italian language knowledge was enough because it was not the lexical meaning of words but the music of the poetic speech, the atmosphere of images and of evolving plot which captivated him. Borges persuades his readers with a whole array of examples that even such old texts as *The Divine Comedy* can be read with pleasure. “Literary history knowledge” about Dante’s life and the fights of the ghibellins and the period prescriptions of the “four-level” reading of the Bible with which Dante wrote his text is not necessarily required, because the text demands, in the first place, that we are spellbound by it and follow it where it leads us. Everybody knows this type of reading: this is how the child reads stories. It is worth to use the experience of this “naive” reading with old texts as well.

*Kalauz Homéroszhoz (A Guide to Homer)*, by Devecseri Gábor is another example of the reading strategy of bringing close very old texts. (Devecseri, 1974) Devecseri, the translator made in fact a double translation of the great epics. By translating them into Hungarian, he made the text available for Hungarian readers. But he probably realised, while taking great pains over the text, that this is not enough for the old texts to be readable today. Readers today cannot read these texts as epics. The *horizon*, the background against which Homer’s epics were listened to in delight *at that time* must also be highlighted. This is what Devecseri does in his *Guide to Homer*. We come to know, among others, the role of “epic elements” in the live medium of epics. Invocation for example is not an external ornament but the author’s intentionality organically built into the text. The poetic formulation of the story well-known by everybody at that time had to be original

and amaze its readers. Therefore the author needed a poetic energy which required the help of the Muses. This is the role of the invocation in epics. Devecseri's *Guide* teaches us that all that became generally known as knowledge of literary theory about the epic (the specific structure of epics, the recurring epithets, the "*deus ex machina*" and the repetitions) becomes meaningful and experience-like if it serves the highlighting the reading background of epics.

The examples mentioned above are useful for us exactly because of their common features. The authors of these readings (both the writer and the translator) shared their *experiences as readers*. Both of them reached the conclusion that *classical texts might become delightful readings for recipients even today*. The secret of making something readable is not some complicated prescription for reading, the development of some esoteric method, but rather the rehabilitation of the "naive", "astonished" mode of reading in the interest of comprehensive reception. We must allow the wonderful effect of the first reading prevail, to the greatest possible extent. And there is another similarity in the two readings which can be used in the "close-bringing" reading: *the slow, multiple reading, the leisurely "tasting" of the text, the return to some of its parts*.

Observing the similarities between the two readings could also be useful for us. Borges' reading of Dante allowed the horizon of the text to prevail against those canonised readings which are rather drawbacks than promoters of the *delightful and comprehensive* reading of texts.

The above mentioned examples prove that the operation of the *consciousness of the history of influence* is really necessary for the comprehensive-delightful reading of literature. It is a condition of approaching world literature works as well as Hungarian literary works.

We might ask, what is the difference then between Hungarian and world literature works, regarding reception?

Nothing, we could answer immediately, but that Hungarian works are written in our mother tongue and therefore, in spite of their distance, they are closest to us. Whereas with world literature we get acquainted through translations or "in original", there is always a "distance" due to the level of unfamiliarity of the language. However, the difference which seemingly separates world literature and works in our mother tongue, also links them inseparably. Hungarian and world literature *form a unit*, exactly through the act of reception, in our receptive consciousness. The works contribute to each other's reading, they interpret and permanently reinterpret each other - this phenomenon is called *intertextuality*. Thus Hungarian literature becomes a living part of world literature and vice versa.<sup>28</sup>

Basically, it does not matter if it is a Hungarian or a world literature work which *addresses* us: the *address* is important which elicits our need to *bridge* this

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<sup>28</sup> "... it is the historical being of literature which makes possible that a work belongs to world literature." (Gadamer, 1984, p.124.)

distance. The relative closeness due to the mother tongue helps the approach of relatively more distant, world literature works whereas these latter strengthen the ability of acknowledging *otherness* in reading. This is a basic condition of the reception of our own literature as well.

The consequence of this for teaching literature is that a *historical-dialogical approach of Hungarian works placed in the medium of world literature* is optimal for the readers (pupils).

If we think about it, we realise that Hungarian literature can only be discussed on its merits in the medium of world literature and vice versa. If we wish to reach the delightful reading of old (and new) texts through the consciousness of the history of influence we must be able to point out the intersections of works with world literature traditions.

Let us think of the tradition of literary history, taught at school as well, through which Bálint Balassi is “the first Hungarian poet”. How can this qualification be verified for pupils in the 9th form, unless by the experience of reading poems by Balassi and throwing light on the background, by activating already existing knowledge?

First, “throwing light on the background” points to an apparent contradiction. We have a rich literature in the 16th century, therefore Balassi was preceded by poets and works, or at least they were his contemporaries. Why is he “the first poet”? The question and the resolving of this contradiction throws all in this form. We can choose at our wish from a whole array of works, according to time and the situation. Important is that we *ensure the coherence of the train of thought and throw light on the relations between the questions arising. It is exactly the consistent assertion of the consciousness of the history of influence which makes this possible.* (It is advisable that the textbook creates a “dialogue” between as many works as possible, so that we can choose from them, moreover, we can even replace them with others.)

### **Parallels of the attendant arts**

It is obvious at the first glance that the first volume of the *Comprehensive Reading of Literature* contains many illustrations. However, if we dip into the book we will immediately see that the illustrations are organically built into the material of the book: they are accompanied by questions, exercises and the explanatory texts often refer to them. This might perhaps recall the ideal of the “complex aesthetic education”. I would like to show that this is not the case.

The complex aesthetic education is “the effort of modern literature teaching to ensure that all branches of art exert their manifold effects simultaneously, preserving however the central role of literature. (...) The study of styles - of the common features appearing in all branches of art in a given period - in high school literature teaching makes necessary the awareness of the common

features of literature of the age and the other branches of art related to it (architecture, painting, sculpture, music)". (*Pedagógiai lexikon* II, 1977, 409.)

If we examine the above definition more thoroughly, we can immediately discover in a concept which might be called "objectifying view of art". In this context art (more specifically, literature) appears as the *object* of education and therefore the *aim* of teaching literature is to convey the rich system of knowledge linked to this object. As this object happens to be literature, the other branches of art can play a supplementary role in teaching; thus the attending arts serve the reinforcement of the knowledge about literature and of the "awareness of the common features of literature and the attendant arts." It might seem for a moment that this objectifying concept is in contradiction with the "manifold aesthetic effect" mentioned in the definition, as though a perspective of the aesthetics of reception would gain its reason for existence within the "complex aesthetic education." But it is only that, according to the logic of this view, this objectifying model spreads over the process of education as well: pupils are the *objects* of education, they must be subjected to the "manifold aesthetic effect" for the sake of the effective acquiring of knowledge.

What is the difference between the idea of the "complex aesthetic education" and the view of art and education represented by the *Comprehensive Reading of Literature*?

Let us commence with our former statement that our relation to literature and art can be of a dialogic and experience-like nature (as well) and people need first of all such dialogic experience of art. In the context of this conception it appears natural the consideration that works of art produce their *effect* through *reception*.

If we take this consideration seriously we become amused by the above mentioned objective of the complex aesthetic education that "all branches of art exert their manifold effects simultaneously, preserving however the central role of literature." Let us imagine: you can hear the music, you are attracted by slides or the screen of the TV (and all this at the same time!), while we are reading - *first of all* - because literature must preserve its central place at the literature class. Is this not the chaotic state we fear these days, which makes hopeless the work of the literature teacher and of which we wish to protect the youth (even for the sake of improving the statistics surveying reading)? Is it not the task of the school to undo the tangle of stimuli taking their effect "*simultaneously*" and ensure therefore that the reception suits the "particular time" of the works of art?<sup>29</sup>

Indeed: we live among a profusion of works and effects. It is also true that this great variety is disturbing only if it remains strange for us. It might be an inexhaustible richness for he who familiarises himself with it.

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<sup>29</sup> The requirement of the work is that we *turn to it with consideration* and we learn in the process of reading to "treat time properly, that is, as the work requires." (Gadamer, 1994, 68.)

How can we familiarise ourselves with this world which often seems to be chaotic?

The point is that the works of art are in our world; more precisely, they form the world we call “ours” together with us. They are here, they *stay* with us: books, buildings, pictures, musical notes, instruments, statues, films - they bring with them the atmosphere of various times, and bear like an aura the horizon in the world of which they came into being. Nevertheless we must underline: works of art are “*contemporary*” with us but they are not *simultaneous*. What does that mean?

We take a volume of poetry from the shelf and leaf through it. We visit the art gallery of a distant town to see again the painting which fascinated us some time ago. Sometimes we stop to admire the buildings of the Main Square or the balcony of a baroque palace which we did not notice before, although we are in a hurry. We go to the theatre to see a well-known play under a new direction. We can hardly wait to see a film which promises to be good. Regarding these experiences we should consider the fact that although these possibilities (and millions of others) are at our disposal at the same time, simultaneously, *we could profit from them only if we had let them manifest themselves separately*. These works of art were dumb (or, on the contrary, too noisy) parts of the world until they personally addressed us. Therefore the task of the literature class is not to ensure that these works of art exert their “manifold aesthetic effect” *simultaneously*, but, on the contrary, how they address us *one by one*, and we should be able to answer this call.

How does this become possible?

We must resort to the results of our former considerations. We have seen that becoming aware of the experience that works of art have their own requirement of reason and reception will be successful only if this requirement of reason can be asserted through the work itself, allowing a successful *aesthetic activity* at the literature class as well. Works of art express the meaning brought along in time through their form; we can answer the address of works by “tuning” into this form. The effect of the work is thus helped by the act of reception.

Thus we must question the objectives formulated in the definition of “complex aesthetic education”. The “necessity” of studying “the common features of all branches of art in a given historico-cultural period” becomes questionable. Works address us *one by one* and “monopolise” us for the time they are with us. At the same time, works are “jealous”: they hold us in their attraction and do not let our attention *divided* or *attracted* by something else. The reading of a book is “genuine” if we are “wrapped up in it”; the painting requires a *lingering* attention, etc. In these cases we are not attracted by “common features” but by differences, individual features, all which we feel peerlessly unique in the work.

Although works are present in our life simultaneously (like people) they do not address us at the same time. Most often they do not address us immediately,

at the first encounter. They wait for long, they *bide their time*. It happens that we walk along a well-known building every day, for years, until we *observe* it and then we must stop to admire it. All that was unobserved comes into sight: the massive compactness or the slenderness and "lightness" of walls. Even the air vibrating and breathing round the building acquires significance as it comprises the atmosphere of the "then" and "now". The *surroundings* of the building also emerge. It strikes the eye if a house, bush or tree is not *fitting*. The houses, the other buildings which stand near each other, facing each other or even back to each other bear the necessities of old times, the demands and traces of life of people long dead. We often have the same experience with books: they stand on the shelf for a long time. We have perhaps learnt about them at school, but, the moment must come when the real *encounter* takes place.

Works always address us one by one: does that mean that we do not need the parallels of the attendant arts in the literature class?

We can answer with all certainty that we need them indeed, because works *still* live in each others' medium. They are linked by millions of invisible threads and they carry on a conversation through our "mediation". (Somebody who knows József Tornyai's paintings reads Ady's poems in another way and vice versa.) We could give plenty of examples of the "*intermedial*" relation of works of art. We could say that the invisible but still live texture of intermedial relations forms the "horizon" of works and works always compel this to contribute to the effect made on their receptors.

(So we can admit that literature does not have a favoured, "central" place among other branches of art; it was only considered as such by an analytic, objectifying scientific view. If the literary text is the "main character" at the literature class, this does not mean that literature occupies a higher rank in the hierarchy of arts than other branches of art, but that the aesthetic activity is carried out through the experience of the also didactically organised meeting of literary texts.)

It often happens that a work of art opens up through the mediation of other works. The reception of old prayers and hymns might be prepared by lingering in a church, when a fresco, the vivid colours of the painted glass or the stones of the floor conjure up the *picture* which touched these sights centuries ago. We understand then how *different* the world belonging to that glance was from ours and, still, it is so close to it! But the order can be reversed: the world-opening power of a book, a poem, a text can unexpectedly come into action in *another* situation and can help us to pass into the world opened by another work of art - a painting, a film, a piece of music.

Reading - as we have seen - is not the passive suffering of the effect of a work of art, but an active activity: a dialogue with a unique work. However, we must not forget that the work, with its form, does not refer only to itself but it also brings along the "horizon" of its origin: the aesthetic expectations which it was

born to fulfil. This horizon surrounds every work of art like an invisible circle of light and the comprehensive reception must pay due regard to this. Here we need the assessment of distance, the ability to adjust to it, the consciousness of the history of influence. The consciousness of the history of influence entails the ability of *comparison*, the sensitivity to the variety of permanently moving relations kept on by works between them and openness towards the reception of effects by which works address us and compel us to “speak with them”. This view might lead us to admit the necessity of “parallels of the attendant arts” or, in other words, “intermedial relations”.

From this perspective it is obvious that the literature teacher must not take on the role of art historian or cultural historian, because it is not the conveying of special knowledge which is basic for the understanding of literature, but practising the adequate attitude of reception for the encounter with these works.<sup>30</sup>

The “attendant arts parallels” of the *Comprehensive Reading of Literature* were brought to life by the above considerations. Its rich material of examples is destined to represent the works living “simultaneously” within us. On the other hand, its aim is to allow works to enforce each other’s effect and readers to have the possibility to experience, from as many sides as possible, being addressed by these works. The aim of this body of examples is not to increase textbook material but to activate and keep fresh the power of imagination so that passing the borders of worlds becomes possible.

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<sup>30</sup> “The experience gained by the relation with art is not the privilege of the expert, says Jauss, too, and reacting to the conditions of this experience cannot be the esoteric interest of philosophical or theological hermeneutics - thus we can perhaps make superfluous excuses for the unavoidable passing of borders”. (Jauss, 1997, 141.)

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