

Theoretical approaches on the discussion of literature teaching at school*

Carolina Alonso Padilla**

**Advanced student of Professorate of Letters, School of Philosophy and Letters (UNT). A member of Project PIUNT 2013, Reading, writing and arguing in disciplines: perspectives and practices of students and teachers, led by Dr. Constanza Padilla, and presented at the Subsidy Summons, 2013. Secretary of Science and Technique of UNT. Email: caro_alonso@hotmail.com. Business address: Avenida Benjamin Araoz 800, San Miguel de Tucuman, Argentine.

Abstract

Throughout the 20th century, and so far, the debate about literature teaching at school has become more complex thanks to the contributions by literary theory, linguistics, pedagogy, sociology, among other disciplines. When facing the polemic question on what for, or why teaching literature, these disciplines legitimated such practice at the education system by assigning it various functions and objectives, including communication, pleasure, subjectivity construction, artistic appreciation and critical thought development. Meanwhile, some disciplines keep dichotomous concepts and attitudes, (such as classic literature versus youth literature, books versus technology, communicative function versus aesthetic function); some other try to conciliate such divisions from a multidisciplinary vision. Through this paper we propose to analyze and present an argumentative map of these ways of justifying literature at school considering recent approaches, starting from those emerged about middle the 20th century, the “pleasure pedagogies” that set what the main discussion may be. This path is not presented on an expositive or a descriptive manner, but on a critical perspective as it questions the concepts kept about literature, teaching, students, teacher role, etc. Thus, we question those perspectives that blocked literary lecture, the latter being a process and an experience that allows critically reading the world and no as a mere curricular topic that must be evaluated and learnt. In this manner we try to set a debate, discuss these proposals as a necessary question to – as teachers and mediators- theoretically position ourselves so that the decisions made at the classroom lead to modify the relationship between students and literature.

Key words: Debates, teaching, reading, literature, purposes.

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Introduction

Literary reading at the school has been justified in different manners before political, socioeconomic and cultural changes which caused diverse approaches on its functions, usefulness, methods, interests, etc. Alarming speeches such as little reading, invasion of mass media and other, promoted review of this controverted and complex object itself, since it involves discussion on its usefulness for later life at the school, its need to understand texts, its representation as an artistic expression, etc.

Thus, for example, since the end of XIX Century the purpose of literature was citizen formation and nationalizing of students¹. Along XX Century, and so far, the debate has turned more complex due con contributions of literary theory, linguistics, pedagogy, sociology, among other disciplines. Before the polemic question about the purpose, and the reason of teaching literature, such practice was legitimated in the education system, by assigning it various functions and objectives, including the pleasure of the same as an aesthetic object (defined over all by so called “pedagogies of pleasure”, parting from the 80s, communication (that is, literary reading subject to learning of grammar and language, a proposal surged in 1990 since the CBSs), development of critical thought, (together with contribution of critical analyzes of the speech and critical linguistic), construction of subjectivity (together with studies of psychoanalysis), etc.

The purpose of this project is to analyze and present an argumentative map of these ways of justifying literature at the school, considering recent approaches, parting from “pedagogies of pleasure”, mentioned above, which opened the discussion, perhaps more important and of current impact. Notwithstanding this journey has been known, in general, from a “historiographical” perspective, that is, in an expositive of descriptive fashion, we approach it from a critical view, reflecting on concepts supported on literature, teaching, the student, etc.

Thus, we question ourselves about these “modes of telling reading”, together with Gustavo Bombini: “For the impact caused on construction of a social image of reading, and on design of new pedagogies, new ways of learning, and teaching new promotion strategies.” (Bombini, 2008:23).

1. This view was retaken during the dictatorship term 1976 by rejecting incorporation oof authors of the Latin American Boom (Bombini, 2011).

Therefore, we will take into account contributions both by specialists of didactics and literature, literary theory, etc. and those more “informally” involved, that is, writers, critics, promoters, etc., because all of them conform a field of debate which transcends the school issue, and exercise a strong influence on decisions made at such debate field. It transcends the school issue, and returns to it to re-mean it. By so doing, we seek to continue the discussion as a necessary question to eliminate prejudices, and mix extreme postures, in order to improve stakes in the practice and re-position an object as discussed as legitimated in the education system.

Reading for pleasure: implications on the canon and the school

In response to enclyopedist approach of the military dictatorship, based on memorizing lists of authors and “representative” texts, literature at the school underwent a turn regarding its concepts, tools and methods since 1984. Incorporation of works already considered as a part if infantile literature, as well as graffiti, songs and tales, the sight aimed at the ludic and aesthetic, and change from activities proper of grammar standards and theoretic to exploration and exposition of personal impressions made what Gustavo Bombini (2001) named “pedagogy of pleasure”, which provided a new proposal on the relationship between literature and the school. In this sense, such approach supposes existence of a “natural” pleasure of reading, that should not be contaminated by school letters. The action of “promoters” and new writers of infantile literature contributed to consolidation of this proposal.

The first paradox surged along its development was the obligation of enjoying or the “duty of pleasure”, which, in spite of providing a new opening toward the canon and personal exploration, it masks certain “legitimate pleasures”, as claimed by Jean-Privat (2001:50). Teresa Colomer also states it by claiming that there is “a double speech between the legitimate and the accepted”, since in practice, this approach surges as the first instance for subsequent “more complex readings” (Colomer, 2005:56).

Thus, if at first it was intended not only to remove reading from schools, but also “de-hierarching” roles, through the idea of the teacher as a mediator, many times such distance between subjects surges when it is conceived the assumption that “tastes and interests should be developed”, (Piacenza 2012:114), either by first reading the classics to then, allows personal

readings, or vice versa. Adults, then, are those who determined and decide what tastes and interests of students are, (which decision is sometimes accompanied by market trends) and, parting from it, design the path that readers should follow. In this sense, the decision regarding readings and how to approach them is expressed as a “negotiation” between teachers and students, for a subsequent “formal” analysis. The paradoxical perceptive of pleasure, is demonstrated, as Carolina Cuesta claims, in activities asked to the student in classes: “previously to pass to the questionnaire, the students should demonstrate us how they have enjoyed the text through evaluations on the case (...)” (Cuesta, 2006:20).

In turn, Mora Diaz Súnico joins the polemic by denouncing the ideological character hidden by this: “fingered and little clear concept of pleasure” (Diaz, 2005:22). He states that in Argentine, through the Federal Law of Education, this proposal meant, in reality, a simplification of reading, parting from the idea that pleasure is obtained through the same contact with the book. Rather, reading literary texts does seem to become a problem and complex – therefore overestimated- “through operations that require identification of the enunciation context parting from recognition of textual marks, of text bearers, and reading functions (...)” (Diaz, 2005:23-24). The “innovator” approach of the 80s, was distorted in the next decade a such approach underestimated the literary object at considering it as a one more speech within the social sphere, and slandered it as an artistic expression with own rules; in this manner such growing “removal from the school” endangered literature permanence at the school (Diaz, 2005).

The most meaningful thing of this study – and which deserves to be more emphatically stated – is Diaz Súnico’s denounce on cultural exclusion masked by the concept of pleasure. For such purpose, he takes *The pleasure of the Text* (1989) by Roland Barthes - considered as the source of this pedagogy - and the distinction made by the author between *enjoyment and pleasure*². The presumed democratization by the

² “If pleasure is expressible, storable, if the subject may speak of his pleasure, enjoyment is expressible because it is a point of fracture in the speaking subject. Then, as pleasure may be verbalized it is linked to the culture of masses, with subject who do not recognize reading enjoyment, that is, with common people who (read no intellectuals, no specialists). Instead, since enjoyment may not be verbalized is restricted to the intellectual ambit, to subjects capable of liking certain literary culture because they bear some specific formation, thus giving it an individualist character separated from and separator of masses” (Diaz Súnico, 2005: 27)

Federal Law, is really a sample of a “demagogic attitude”, which only provides an “illusion of reading” since it does not provide “the necessary tools to develop such competences which ensure the enjoyment of reading literature”. (Diaz, 2005:28). Therefore, the author considers necessary for the school to ensure such specific learning to provide subjects with access to the “Sphere of legitimate culture” (Diaz, 2005:29). In that manner, reading enjoyment could be experience, in the senses proposed by Barthes. In order to support that idea, he takes Pierre Bourdieu’s study, *The rules of art*, which claims that the phenomenon of perception and appreciation of any artistic work, is the result from certain social and historical conditions which led to its production, and subsequent reproduction (inculcation) of its aesthetic value (Bourdieu, 1995).

The author’s statement is fundamental since it opens the discussion toward ideological and sociological aspects of “pedagogy of pleasure”. Although she mentions the school as one of the main spaces where cultural values are taken into account and legitimated, it is still necessary to expand on the concept of *legitimate culture* taken from Bourdieu’s work. That is, for Diaz Súnico, the school should provide the skills and dispositions which lead to form a “knowing eye”, to get such culture. However, it would be worth to first question on processes, institutions, and subjects involved in legitimation and promotion of aesthetic values. The same Bourdieu states in in another study:

When speaking about legitimate culture, it is necessary to remember that domination of the dominating culture is most completely imposed when it less appears as such, and it therefore achieves recognition of its legitimacy, an implicit recognition in disregarding its objective truth. Legitimacy is not legality: if individuals of the lowest classes in terms of culture, almost always, direct or indirectly recognize legitimacy of aesthetic rules imposed by legitimate culture, they may pass all of their life *de facto*, out of the application field of such rules without arguing their legitimacy, that is, the pretention of being universally recognized (Bourdieu, 2010:67).

Therefore, it becomes fundamental to rethink this concept by questioning those interests involved in its configuration, and it could even be stated, questioning *legitimacy of what is legitimate*. Whom does it serve and represent? At what extent should it continue to be accepted at the education institution without

considering its pertinence and social implication? Legitimation is the product of imposition of a *symbolic violence*, other concepts included on Bourdieu's work and explain conflictive relationships among social classes, generations, genres, etc., and over all, between the *cultural arbitrator* and the pedagogic work where it perpetuates it, which would be one cause of unequal opportunities³.

Infantile and juvenile literature: canon and literary quality

As mentioned above, the discussion on reading pleasure impacted the canon through incorporation of a new infantile literature and “non-literary” texts, in order to open possibilities for creation and imagination of readers. The debate on infantile and juvenile literature is a central aspect within literature didactics and continues to open polemic, by questioning aspects such as: literary quality, the universal canon and the school canon, the conception held on target-reader, commercial imperatives, etc.

Maria Teresa Andruetto (2009), questions *infantile and juvenile* adjectives in literature, since they hide a utilitarian and functional aspect, given by market requirements. She means that these categories that should be informative “turn into aesthetic categories”. In addition, notwithstanding there is a recognized group of authors initiated on the 80s, during this decade and so far, this literature was considered as minor, marginal, and the work of its authors is underestimated today because it “contributes to form a ghetto of recognized authors, even sometimes consecrated, that does not hold sufficient entity as to be read by readers” (2009:36).

Likewise, the critic considers that the target is underestimated by supposing such target with certain interests that always turn around the same topics: friends, love, fears, adult incomprehension, etc. with a linear structure, and colloquial language, direct, “similar” to the one of readers. Everything, by taking advantage of the concept of pleasure, would ensure the: “Emotional pact of reading that would be enough to achieve its approach to literature,” (Diaz, Súnico, 2005:24).

³ For a study and analysis of these concepts cfr. Fernandez J. M.(2005). “The notion of symbolic violence in Pierre Bourdieu: a critical approach”. In: Notebooks of social work. Book 18, pp-7-31.

It is also recognized that this type of literature contains a *moralist or educative* perspective, related to functions and representations traditionally assigned to school reading. Teresa Colomer express it as follows “(...) the society uses to be more concerned for moral education than literary education” (2005:184), and then:

(...) simplistic books endlessly appear explicitly showing behavior models, as if dealing with a self-aid lesson that the reader should directly apply in his life: *¿how to overcome infantile zeals?, ¿how to relate with others? (...)*. We are in the best tradition of those early didactic books which used to tell children how to be clean, or charitable through interposition of a fiction personage. (Colmer, 2005: 185).

Thus, we see a *paternalist* vision of the school, in Sonia Hidalgo Rosas' (2006) words, seeking to protect readers of some topics which they are not prepared for. Gemma Luch (2004), proposes the term *psycho-literature* to refer to the “new literature ‘in values’”, aimed specially to young individuals and which “marks some behavior standards either from denounce or from negative effects on personages who do not follow them (...)”. These narrations are identified by their “politically correct ideology”, and proposed values such as “education for consumption, for health, for human rights and peace, equality between sexes, environment, multi-culture, cohabitation, and sex education.” (Lluch, 2004:181).

Andruetto warns on commercial purposes of many publications: “Because economic strategies of large editorial groups, the reader (...), is many times previously conditioned by information and contents imposed through extra-literary elements.” Therefore, “Literary quality of any book uses to be a second plane issue.” (2009:34).

For the critic, the purpose of this literature is to “trap” readers through identification with protagonists, underestimating the work with language, history complexity, world visions, etc. That is why, its “readers” insistently refer to the need for a literature which *interpellates, questions, disquiets, moves*, etc. It is in this sense most of the time polarization surges between “low quality” literature (with the above mentioned characteristics), and the “good literature” resulting from being the one configured as canonical. That is, notwithstanding infantile literature and juvenile historically has lost prestige, a considerable number of writers are recognized

today as representatives of such literature, and as indispensable at the school *corpus*.

In the case of literature exclusively juvenile, it happens that this category is more questioned than the *infantile* one, if a *corpus* composed of classic texts, that would respond to that “significant experience” so sought by the reader is proposed, without falling in the easy and linear argumentation, colloquial language, and the “vacuum” sense.

Here, a problematic question and of a great debate surges: ¿who, and how is literary quality defined? Andruetto considers that the role of critic is fundamental in this matter, since, together with parents, school, mediators, writers, etc., build readers, and according to their decisions, quality of offered products will depend on them. Thus, “The industry will then exist equal of better (...), but editing better quality books, if we achieve a better quality of readers, that is, if we build more interested readers, more critical, more enthusiast, and more selective.” (2009:39). However, the role performed by literary critic deserves a separated debate, since interests at stake should be considered, many times in defense of a “literary quality”, difficult and complex of defining.

In addition, there is also a polarization on literature “use”. In one hand, it would seem that the one responding to the canon is to be studied and analyzed in class through questionnaires. In the other hand, the *juvenile* is the one that, as stated above, would help to “hook” targets and would receive a more non-structured, *pleasant* and free treatment. This division, for Beatriz Helena Robledo (2010), causes in readers an ambiguous through the text: “First, they see a literature that they should study, which responds to the universal canon, and other that they may read freely (...). One is boring, terribly boring, or non-understandable, the other is too *light*.” (Robledo, 2010:180). In this manner, questions on treatment received by literary reading at the school surge: chronological organization, summary of argumentations, large questionnaires, author’s biography, etc.: a literature “to be studied, not to be read” (Robledo, 2010:181).

Miguel Dalmaroni’s contribution results clarifier as he holds that, notwithstanding evaluations and judgments performed in the society, influence and participate in selecting texts to be read at the classroom, there is also a school canon. Such canon is not limited only to a list of works but it also includes postures and valuations on such works, which many times oppose

to those prescribed from outside. For example, an author, like Isabel Allende, who lacks of prestige for the university academy, may participate in literature classes at the school where, thanks to other type of text circulation: “The authorization level of voices is very different, debates they promote are others and, at least for moments, are held on the assumption that those discussing and stated argumentations, are pairs (Dalmaroni 2011:149-150).

During the last Century and so far, the named promotion of reading has performed a role parallel to the activity at the education institution parting from its proposals for activities, *corpus* and conceptions of literature. This separation is what for Robledo, has led to duality between “reading for pleasure or recreative, and ‘serious’ reading, or in the worst cases, ‘boring’ reading and ‘pleasant’ reading” (Robledo 2010:131). However, proposals of reading promotion have recently begun to enter the school thanks to diffusion by various agents, and considerations by the same teachers regarding the function of literature, having started to open the possibility of producing “real situations of reading.” (Robledo, 2010:67). This aspect will be expanded below.

Technology, media and consumption: the “great enemies” of books

Linked to these considerations a “messianic” conception of reading appears, since it would be able to protect and rescue the subjects of a society pursued by consumption, technology and media. We are speaking of an alarming view to the present and the future where intelligence, responsibility, subjectivity and “culture” (in the narrowest sense of the term) would be in danger⁴.

Currently, those speeches would seem obsolete. However, we are still witnesses of such conception of the reality, either through the media itself, and public opinion, or through the same teachers and parents who detest the new devices brought to cause problems. And reading is the main center of concern. In this sense, critics and speeches are loaded with very negative meanings, such as the idea of a sick society, unreal, with no values, etc., which some considered as lost, and others, place reading, and over all, the literary reading, as the possible, or, sometimes, unique solution.

⁴ This perspective predomined in the speeches of late 90s. Books like *The Educative Tragedy* (1999) by G. Jaim Etcheverry and *Homo Videns* (1997) by G. Sartori, repeating the phenomenon of the “evil of the century”, announced the consequences of technological advancements for education, youth and the society in general.

Thus, Bettina Caron (2012) holds: “Literary reading may operate as a *humanizing antidote* for construction of subjectivity” (2012, 15), and also “perhaps a possibility of curing response may be found in literature, as a sort of *interference* in the dominion of media and technology” (Caron, 2012:43). The authors follows Michele Petit’s proposals who, from some contents of psychoanalysis, considers that reading may rebuilt identity, subjectivity, and personality, which means a “repairing reading” (2001:67) for particular conflictive situations such as sorrow, disease, social and cultural exclusion, etc.

Caron takes Petit’s ideas, but considering that the conflict and loss are consequences of a mediatic society and consumption: “since in any manner, save qualitative difference, are insulated (...) *from themselves*, that is, programmed from outside and ignoring their subjectivity.” (2012:48). Thus for Caron, young individuals are “victims of a sort of *manipulated immersion* which trends to dehumanize them, because they, being immersed as fundamental protagonists of the consuming system, alone, by themselves, *may not see it.*” In this sense, literary reading and speeches by philosophers, anthropologists, etc., “may help (...) young individuals, parents and us, their formal educators, to remove the hypnotic veil of media.” (2012:20).

These assumption may show an underestimation of juvenile culture⁵, which is deducted parting from the author’s idea that the same is the product and consequence of a chaotic society that she analyzes, but not from searches of its members. Thus, rock music, mobile phones, etc., *prevent* formation of an identity and (...) hamper continuance of *subjectivity conformation*” (2012:43).

This extreme posture unifies market, consumption, media and technology into a kind of “megasystem” which meets common objectives, without regard to its obvious heterogeneity. Far from abandoning pessimism, it just takes into account negative issues, but not possibilities effectively provided by technological progress, such as democratization of information and knowledge. In this sense, and paradoxically, the same Michèle Peetit reveals: “those alarming speeches may be perceived (...) as a testimony of a desire of control and dominion” and thus, adolescents see that, in reality, “they should read to satisfy adults.” (Petit, 2001:39). Therefore,

⁵ In the wide sense of the term, that is, manifestations preferences, tastes, customs, etc.

this alarming view subtly masks an underestimation of young individuals. In addition, by ignoring those elements forming juvenile identity and culture, the important role they play in their representations on the “other” culture, which may be called “Hegemonic” is also ignored. Everything turns into a fundamental material involved in reading, not only literary but also “reading of the world” as seen below.

If notwithstanding Carol is right in many considerations, her proposal should be analyzed in the light of new challenges brought by these changes, but not as a conspiracy which we should protect from. Thus, recent projects based on incorporation of various technological devices are left to a second plane, in order to improve methodological aspects of teaching. However, it is not a matter of a question of method, since through these new tools, participation in culture in a more diversified manner is supported. In addition, speeches of media, publishing, and technology should open the possibility of being discussed and questioned in order to produce the named “critical thought” that all of us defend.

In addition, it is necessary to consider the undeniable impact caused by new technology on ways of reading and on thought structures. Thus, notions of hypertext, node, link, network, etc., talk us about a break in the conception of reading as a linear, uniform and passive process. Advancements allow different manners of interaction with texts, new of circulation and knowledge transmission which lead the reader to assume a centrally active role.

In this manner, it is possible that teaching work does not turn into a field battle among “them” (a part of a “subculture” and a multi-mediatic society) and “we” (in possession of the book and intend to get away from such challenges). It is necessary to deepen more on understanding these tools, in order to continue to open possibilities of democratization and decentralization they propose, far from falling in extreme postures before progressing changes.

Literature as appropriation of culture

Other proposals on literary reading at school are those based on literature as a way of reading culture, in the wide sense of the term, as a way of appropriating of it and knowledge, far from categories which have dominated planning, practices, evaluations, researches, etc. These statements, while do not categorically oppose the above mentioned ones, do question some principles which hamper relationships among teachers, books and students.

Carolina Cuesta (2006), to present her posture, starts from questions related, first, to links established by readers with literature, and teachers knowledge on such links. On this matter, she claims: “links that show in reading ways, the amount of cultural meaning, not in disagreement with theoretic skills on literature, both with those already taught at the school and those not taught yet.” (2006:54). This means, that those real skills shown by readers may be triggers to study theories surrounding literature. In her words, “Articulating ways of reading literature of our students – in the political decision and pedagogic of reading together with them at the classroom – with teaching skills is to recover our role as professionals of teaching.” (2006:91).

Secondly, and to explain her proposal, she questions concepts so rooted in the speech on the topic as *previous skills, competences, model reader*, so published and accepted by theory of reception-, *the literary taste and the aesthetic-, juvenile culture-* always “demonized”-, etc. Such concepts answer to ideal visions of processes and subjects of reading and, therefore, do not include what effectively happens at the classroom.

Finally, she considers to change the questions and the vision about the two traditional ways of reading at the school: comprehension, and pleasure:

It is no longer a matter of observing whether our students answer the questionnaire correctly (...), the no longer need to show us (...) that they have liked the text as a previous condition for teachers to attentively listen to what students will tell us about texts (2006:57).

This reminds us what was expressed on the “perspective of pleasure” and the “path of tastes and interests”, previous to the subsequent “formal” analysis.

Far from the most traditional perspective of reading (literal comprehension, scanning for data within the same text, mechanization of subsequent activities, etc.), Cuesta holds that cultural meanings are the skills really held, - but not the ones that should be held, those which lead to appropriation of a text, its apprehension and the possibility of understanding its relationship to the reality. Those are the skills which “we do not sufficiently know yet” (2006:62), which “place readers in a role as knowing literary texts and their potential” (2006:68).

Therefore, that so repeated statement that “young individuals do not read”, is refuted by this perspective, because they do read, but not from universal and non-mistaken budgets, not with skills considered as legitimate, but with so heterogeneous skills which include both the Bible and TV. The latter, seen as an object of culture effectively involved in reading – together with others, but not as an enemy which only hinders and hampers text-reader relationship⁶

This manner of reading literature means appropriation of culture, culture in general, and written culture in particular, which event many times may happen at the school. In this sense, it should neither longer be talked about “access” nor “learning”, since it would mean an acceptance and assimilation, or better said, a pretension to it, of certain cultural, universal and arbitrary mandates. In addition, it involves a change of the way of relating the students to texts, a change in the conception of teacher role, which does not impose senses, but listens to those surged in the same readers.

Following Michele Petit, in addition to autonomy, appropriation and transgression, reading may contribute to democratization, since by listening readers it is possible to be:

Better equipped to endure some disregarding processes, or certain oppression mechanisms, to elaborate or recover a position of subject, and not being only the object of others’ speeches. And it requires many treatments with the book (...). Uses which are sometimes silenced, in spite of the fact that many of us experience them (...). This fact leads us to differently think the question of the relationship between reading and emancipation and, by extension, reading and democratization (Petit, 2001:104-105).

Then, the fundamental think is parting from the idea that culture is social and historically strengthened, and it should be taken into account at the time of elaborating literature, a specific cultural object, but always related to others. Making texts, re-making them through learning real links, -but not ideal- which students establish with them. And this is possible by

⁶ In this sense, Cuesta, within narrations of classes included in her book, mentions the experience of a student who reads and open the possibility of understanding the concept of the fantastic, parting from TV programs on paranormal phenomena. Thus, from a cultural knowledge, generally disqualified (...) may (...) deploy a reading method closer to the one of literary studies (...).” (Cuesta 2006:72).

giving readers the word, without stigmatizing their “skills”, and their representations, without imposing senses, abandoning the idea that the text should be understood from certain guidelines. And it does not mean free reading either, based on impressions, as stated in the 80s, but reading with skills that, at first may not be explicitly defined, but which open the possibility of understanding, then, literature and its specific performance.

In this manner, reading comprehension, understood only from narrow margins of literal comprehension, development of taste and pleasure, conceived only as “reading for reading”, the prejudice on objects which is not a part of the “academic” or “erudite” culture (objects seen as obstacles but not as challenges), are called into question at the time of considering literature as way of understanding the reality and the social thing.

It is from this vision that reading is conceived as a social practice. Thanks to contributions made by sociology of reading, readers are no longer intended to be evaluated parting from the amount of read books, or application of categories linked to the text (such as the type of narrator, the argument, resources used, etc.). It is a matter of paying attention to effects produced in the process, “how reading affects and modifies readers.” (Robledo 2010:23).

The mediator, or teacher should avoid imposition of senses or promoting a true impact on readers through activities and readings aimed at configuring an own meaning, parting from personal experience, and unique. As stated, disregarding legitimated considerations on what reading is, and incorporate a “Qualitative and participative observation which leads readers to recognized themselves as such, and transform themselves from their own reading background.” In this manner, it is possible to prepare programs (...) that achieve to be incorporated as a cultural capital.” (Robledo 2010:127-128).

All of the above contributions are unified at coinciding that reading, by leading to appropriation of culture, means re-reading of the world, re-confirmation of what is read, and oneself. Reading is no longer a mechanic activity, evaluated through exercises and closed answers, or a way of “abandoning” the reality and dedicate to pleasure; it is instead a permanent search for answers and sense, a permanent questioning about what surrounds us. Finally, reading is also a possibility of social transformation, since thanks to the word, the letter, it is possible to think of other

ways of the world, both symbolic and real. Reading leads to re-write, and re-write oneself; providing our experience with legitimacy and transcend it.

Conclusions

¿Is it possible to teach literature?

This work has proposed a review of some speeches on the discussion about teaching literature at the school; such speeches come from various ambits (didactics, literary critic, sociology, etc.) which represent the problems that this discipline is faced to.

The summary performed excludes a great amount of contributions. However, we would like to leave an open possibility for subsequent research to include new proposals, and we would also leave an open debate about this research. We consider that a theoretic reflection from various perspectives leads us, as mediators and teachers, to position ourselves and make fundamental decisions on students relationship with reading.

These final words, far from repeating the contents of this work, aim at a reflection surged from analysis of the various proposals. Parting from the question asked herein, we would like to open a fundamental question, which turns into polemic: it is the one related to the possibility of making of literature a *curricular content*, that is, a content that *teaches* and *learns*.

It is important to pay attention to emphasized words, referred to the ambit of pedagogy and didactics. Taking into account that literature is a cultural practice, social and historical, we ask ourselves: ¿At what extent literature and the school are compatible? If literature is considered, from some perspectives, as an art, as a possibility of creating critical and free subjects, ¿at what extent reductionisms and “dissections” realized at the school and text books lead to formation of literary teachers, free and critical?

Beatriz H. Robledo considers that literature suffers a denaturalization: “¿What it was written and created for? It put on the clothes of didactics and teaching and turned into an object of study.” (2011:69-70). It means that at entering into the education institution, a space basically determined by standards, rules and evaluations, is liberating, questioning and transformer potential turned into a problematic until receiving itself such logic of standardization and evaluation.

Then it turns unavoidable to propose a distinction between literature *teaching* and literary *reading* at the school, the first one being perhaps the main obstacle for the second one, when it is understood that *teaching* literature is to expose lists of authors, periods of time, answer questionnaires, and *assimilate* historical and biographic data. Rather, literary *reading* is the one which really allows to read not only a literary text, but overall, through such text, to read the world and understand its social function, its ability to create a more free and more critical thought, the potential to question the reality, and strengthen the word itself. Literature will be able to teach if it is first *read*.

Therefore, we do not claim that literature should be removed from the school, but it is necessary to first review our objectives: ¿What for and why we make literature to be read? And then, ¿what is reading literature? ¿how to read it? Parting from these questions, it is possible to configure its specificity before mistaking it for literary history, grammar analysis, and linguistic, etc. It does not mean either to follow budgets of that “pedagogy of pleasure”, which was reduced to the spontaneous impression, without expanding on possibilities of analysis which effects of literature may produce.

Among the answers expressed in this work, we consider the last one as fundamental, that is, literary reading as a way of reading and appropriate of culture. If really the purpose is *reading* literature, it is necessary to re-think the views on pleasure (which eludes reflection), and on concepts such as previous skills, competences, model reader, etc. It also means to ask *who read and how*, and analyze what role the teacher plays in those readings: ¿Is the teacher a mediator? ¿does he facilitates *reading*, or imposes senses? It means to change and reposition a subject that, at being the language of its raw material, should consider the subject as the main maker of its senses.

In this manner, at reviewing the speeches involved in school decisions, we may be better prepared to approach our practices in literary *reading* and, thanks to it, the possibility of transformation through the word.

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