

# The Cultural Reception Of Literary Movements, And The Need For Conceptual Readjustment Of Critical Terms To Their Contemporary Cultural Usage

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## **Abstract:**

*The paper examines the parameters influencing the formation of literary schools within the framework of Cultural History. Employing methodologies which are derived from both Literary Theory and Cultural Studies, its objective is to illuminate the ongoing dialogue between literature and the socio-cultural milieu of each era. Recognizing the substantial impact of literary and artistic movements on creative output, the article endeavors to elucidate the boundaries, potentials, and ruptures inherent in their examination within cultural history, as well as their interplay with social history and the intellectual movements of their respective periods. The arguments presented underscore the need for a shift in approach towards the study of literary schools, emphasizing both the usefulness of terminologies in analyzing aesthetic trends and the requisite flexibility inherent in any form of classification within literary theory and criticism.*

**Key Words:** *Literary movements; Cultural History; Literary theory; Literary Criticism*

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## **I. Introduction: Literary movements as social projections, and modern theoretical issues**

The question of art and especially literature, in connection to the cultural reality that gives birth to it and moulds it, has preoccupied the minds of artists themselves as well as theorists in different branches of research, while numerous contradictory and often contending points of view have been suggested about their linkage. Throughout the evolution of cultures, human creativity is displayed and imprinted in many ways. Yet, all creators are born of a common womb with the need to imprint a personal or collective perception of the reality that surrounds them (Goldmann, 2000: 60; Bourdieu, 2006: 214-2200).

From the start, the social component of creation has been considered as an integral structural element and acknowledged as a basic trait for all kinds of art, because the image that an individual has about him/herself and the others, either as a creator or as a recipient, is inherent in all phases of artistic procedures. According to Meletinsky (2010: 35, 38), if we accept as an axiomatic principle that all forms of art share common characteristics, because they are all committed to carry the burden of human expression, immediately the general traits of the interaction between art and reality become valid in the case of literature, to which the present study is focusing.

Although the *history of literature* is not necessarily identical to the *history of culture*, yet, it cannot be perceived to function independently, since, to a great extent, literary production interacts with the social and cultural life of its era. Consequently, the issue of interplay between artistic action and the sociopolitical structure has diachronically been the central axis for the theoretic reception of art and it has functioned as the basic core of every artistic dispute and confrontation in the history of art and literature. Ever since Aristotle's approach to the ancient tragedy, we have come across the intellectual interest to elucidate or at least propose ways of comprehending this relationship between art/literature and the cultural environment that defines them.

For this reason, today we have at our disposal a large number of theories and methods approaching the issue of literature and culture interaction from various viewpoints, yet accepting as a common principle that trends in literature, and their aesthetic objections towards dominant structures of the past, are inscribed in the cultural reality that breeds them, but preserve a degree of independence, because literature remains at a separate cultural level with its own rules and history. In relation to the degree of freedom that literature can detain, various estimates have been proposed by theorists and writers, leading to distinct types of receiving the literary production.

Some theories, schools and researchers insist that literature is not a mere reflection of society. They believe that a literary work acquires meaning via the recipient and bears no inherently prescribed identification with sociopolitical data, while any objective illustration of the latter is impossible. So, they claim that the interaction

between literature and cultural reality is limited to the field of literary tradition and does not convincingly reflect the social structure that gives birth to it and which is extremely complex to be recorded in all its aspects.

Even under this prism, literature, a self-reliant though not independent cultural field, cannot be considered apart from the sociopolitical situation. Supposing we hold the reader responsible for assessing the significative identity of the literary work, according to the scope of expectations that tradition sets in each literary genre, yet, the interpretation of works is based on the experiences and the readers' projections formed within a sociohistorically defined cultural identity (Hall, 1990: 9). As Moullas (1993: 92) states it is very difficult for anyone to distinctly separate literary development, i.e. the cultural continuity of literary writing, from the total cultural reality of an era.

In any case, the political, social and intellectual reality of an era interacts with the cultural phenomena and with the literary production, since, events, that at first glance appear disconnected, may be related and influence the literary production. Specifically, culture historian R. Williams has referred to the ways that the interaction of cultural systems, as well as the literary past/present relationship operates, observing that a literary school is but the summing up of only a few specific options from the infinite elements that comprise the past and present. Thus, movements and trends in literature come out of the persistent tendency of authors from the same period to select specific elements and elevate them to exemplary models, while they reject other elements that they consider inferior or negligible, in contrast to any earlier colleagues. However, the options of creators are the fruit of a prolific dialogue with the cultural conditions of every era, because they are based on criteria which originate from the present, the ideology, the social class in which the person, who pioneers the particular interpretative mode, belongs (Williams, 1961: 37-39; Apostolidou, 1994: 19).

These parameters, advocating the birth and formation of a literary school, strongly influencing the history of literature, are on the focus of the present study, considering not only the interaction of the cultural reality and the literary trends, but also concerning the definition and reception of these trends along an ever-reassessed aesthetic interchange between literary works.

The specific article aims at demonstrating the limits, potentials and discontinuity of their evaluation in the history of letters, viewing them as discrete formations of an autonomous field like literature, but also as a self-existent part of a cultural continuum, because the study of this interplay simultaneously amounts to a study of sociohistorical attitudes expressed by individuals and groups during the evolution of human spirituality. The observations, that this work is attempting to stress, betray the need for a change of attitude in the study of literary schools, since their multifaceted character and the significance of de-codification and familiarization with important creators and their work, leaves no margin for ideological constraint or predispositions that affect the research procedure.

It is clear that the representatives of science and literature engaged in the process of creating, shaping and evaluating the aesthetic code that each literary direction determines as an epistemological tool, ought to preserve a readiness of wit for constant revision of the limits and the dynamic correlations brought about by the undercurrent or the manifest dialogue held among literary formations, aiming at the profound comprehension of the evolution of literary writing, which to some extent is part of the evolution of the cultural identity of a social group, a people, humankind itself.

## **II. Framework and Methods. History of literature and sociocultural history**

The paper explores how trends and movements in literature are shaped by the social and cultural dynamics of their respective eras, facilitating a dialogue between the social structure and cultural artifacts, such as literary works. Within this framework, the analysis draws upon principles of literary theory and insights from scholars immersed in the broader realms of Cultural History and Literary Criticism. The aim is twofold: to emphasize the usefulness of literary terms and to emphasize the requisite flexibility that should characterize their application. While these terms are crucial for comprehending the aesthetic trends of each era, they are also conventions shaped by specific cultural contexts.

According to contemporary approaches, literature, as long as it is classified within the cultural field, to make use of the term coined by P. Bourdieu (1998: vii), affects and is affected by the social historic reality (Pourkos, 2007: 52-53, 2009: 17-18). However, when we refer to the concept of social history, we describe not only the narrative of great political events, but also their interaction with the mentality and the demands of the social groups that articulate the overall picture of an era and find expression in the cultural production, on the scientific/intellectual level, as well as in art. Since 1822-1823, Hegel had already noticed the historic foundation of national literatures, produced on the basis of transformations of dominant ideas, while Taine, among the theoretic establishers of the naturalistic viewpoint, employed the positivistic reception of the literary phenomenon, having underlined the historic basis of art (Wilson, 1992: 34-35). Specifically, in his study *Histoire de la littérature anglaise* (1863), he attempts to apply the scientific method in history, claiming that his work is a combination of the positivistic method and the spirit of idealism (Seys, 1999: 221-225).

Of course, many are those who doubt this acknowledgment, claiming that an author is no more than the offspring of his/her literary ancestors. That is, they reach the point of dividing, to some degree, the social system from the literary system, instead of connecting them, although the above mentioned literary ancestors, who contributed to the formation of literary tradition, had themselves been recipients and formative agents of social experience and cultural atmosphere, like their successors. (Hall, 1990: 51, 64-65) This emphatic division, and the rejection of interaction, would lead to simplifications, creating gaps, and posing more problems than solving them. Therefore, we observe that even schools which emphasized the concept of autonomy for the literary system have finally provided some channel of mutual influence between the literary production and the social structure. For example, Russian formalism has accepted that the history of literature and the social cultural history are closely connected. Yet, the above school has detained the notion that each of the fields is a summation of structural laws that rule each of the two separately. Consequently, its followers ended up in stressing the need to study these relationships and interrelations, without rejecting some form of connection. (Moullas, 1993: 92)

In any case, the elucidation of the relationship between literature and cultural reality can be assisted, if we analyze their influence on a common term, *history*, in the sense we described above, i.e. as an all-comprising imprint of the life and itinerary of a social reality. As Scholes (1985: 13-16) notes, history might signify the narration of political and intellectual events, but also the events themselves, because, for reality to be preserved, it has to be changed into some aesthetic form. In this respect, literary production complements a multi-faceted reality and does not oppose it. Thus, the history of literature, as an exposition of great “literary events”, literary trends, genres, important authors and their works, is undoubtedly connected to the important events -e.g. I and II World Wars- and to prior cultural heritage in a relationship of cause and effect. The literary work is born within an era, it interacts as a linguistic entity with the mental structures and ideological components it gestates, and it characterizes a society or a linguistic system.

The history of literature is written in a parallel dialogue with the historic continuity and the linguistic evolution, because a motif or a theme is often the output and offspring of dialectics between literature and the overall cultural atmosphere (Brunel, Pichois & Rousseau, 2003: 191-192). At this point the dual connection of literature (schools and works) with their contemporary cultural conditions becomes apparent. There are points of intersection in the literary evolution, a fact which, on the one hand, testifies a clear convergence with the general cultural reality, while on the other they also confirm the property of literary writing to act independently and autonomously either as the expression of a creative intellect or as manifestation of collective consciousness and local literary tradition. Of course, we refer initially to the interaction with the *historic moment*. At a secondary level, we refer to the connective link of *language* as a system of production and expression of sociocultural attitudes, and still further as an aesthetic means to produce emotion/meaning in literature. It is obvious that these two factors function interactively yet, although they connect literature with the cultural reality, at the same time they set lines of division.

Thus, history, as a sequence of true incidents, is a part of these literary/cultural aspects born within it, since everybody is affected and dependent on this social and linguistic reality. However, the obligation ends there, because from that point onward the management is done by the author according to his/her own decisions. For this reason, as N. Bakolas (1997: 28-29) claims, in history, and in the history of cultural products, we do not find repetitions, but only equivalents, given that each era and literary generation is moulded under different conditions on the political, social and cultural level. Still, he considers that, in different historic and literary periods, relevant situations and similar events may take place, sometimes with amazing analogies. Yet, despite the fact that the audience is enthralled by a sense of cycles in history, because they cherish a continuity of the place and the world, the analogues reveal a dialogue, coincidences and co-relations which indicate a social and cultural correspondence, but never an identification or repetition.

The view of Georg Lukács (2004: 97) on the relationship of literature with reality is equally interesting. He believes that, in literature, the concept of life is set on a new basis, supported by a new perspective, according to which the autonomy of particular elements and their linkage to the reality they depict are unbreakable. However, these elements cannot abolish their strict, abstract autonomy. Their relationship to the whole – no matter how similar it appears to that of organic entities – is no more than a conceptual relationship. Hence, the literary work, no matter how representational it may be, nevertheless detains its own merit.

Further on, though it is difficult for anyone to doubt the interrelation and mingling of sociopolitical data with trends in literature– whether the latter can be termed as literary schools or not – yet, there are no strong arguments against the autonomy in the cultural field of literature. Language, as a vehicle of ideology and as a means of materializing historic narrations, also remains the sole aesthetic tool for the realization of literature, a fact which incorporates literary phenomena to the cultural area, but does not abolish the element of liquidity during the transformation of the cultural reality into literary material.

For example, concerning the intermediation of language, *Semiology* analyzes sufficiently and versatily the difficulties of concurrence, but also the subterranean connections, as it transfers the problem from the outside to the inside, replacing *verisimilitude* with *reference*. The mechanism of reference lies within the text, but in this

sense it is implied that there is an “outwardness which is non verbal”. The signified is implicitly connected to the referents, because, with words, we refer to things and concepts, a connection we consider as the only involvement of outwardness, since to believe in any direct relevance between words and the referent is a delusion (Riffaterre, 1982: 91-100). Therefore, even when history becomes literary material, we cannot refer to an objective record, since not even a scientific historic narrative can be said to be an objective record (Charalambidou, 1997: 251-252). Yet, simultaneously, the individual is present within the literary myth, and so is the surrounding cultural condition within his/her narrative. Hence, both individuals and society are included in the language of individual narratives, no matter how this relationship is defined by the literary schools of the time, and de-codified, or not sufficiently de-codified, by various theories (Ball, 1985).

According to J. Hall (1990: 51-53, 66), language functions as the most important link of correlation between society and art. He claims that literature is a legitimate social testimony, attained through language. During the 20th century, literature was acknowledged, by contemporary linguistics and literary criticism, as the greatest possible depiction of the limits of language, always able to detain interaction with the society through its utterance.

Thus, language was considered to be the only possible path for reality to become “real” in literature. As Valtinos (1997: 335-339) characteristically observes language is what turns historic reference into an element of myth, because it intervenes and realizes sensations. Language gives substance to the historic inertia of an event and transfers it to oral discourse in such a way that its written version becomes “fictional” [“mythical”] discourse. Many theorists and authors have bestowed a general dimension to this statement, claiming that language is the perfect example of the dialectic relationship between the individual and the world (Grant, 1988).

In this way, social experience and literary phenomena (like aesthetic distinctions of particular literary trends) converge, are located and depend on the linguistic expression that substantiates any form of ideology, artistic stance, and subjective envisagement, within reality. The position and attitude adopted by authors through time and by national literary systems towards the way that language intervenes, moulds and depicts reality, turning it into literary material, becomes pivotal in the formation of literary schools.

### **III. The Formation Of Literary Movements As An Aesthetic Confrontation Between Social Groups Within The Cultural Landscape**

According to researchers, culture evolves interdependently with economic and social changes. For this reason, the theorists of cultural studies have approached culture as an expression or reflection of society. Cultural production is now considered to be closely connected to economic and social conflict and change. For example, the *Renaissance* is related to the class- struggles in Italy by the end of the Middle Ages, and *Romanticism* is defined as a bourgeois movement (Burke, 2009: 132-133; Haskell, 1993: 335-346).

Some researchers, like Williams and Gramsci, took this connection of literature to the cultural condition, a connection that conceals sociopolitical signification, even further, by exploring the concept of *cultural hegemony*. I.e., they observed that ruling classes do not govern only directly, but also indirectly via aesthetic models that authors, being nurtured artistically inside a particular cultural atmosphere, express and project either consciously or unconsciously (Burke, 2009: 73; Eagleton, 1994: 53-65). Every society demands its own art, to express and imprint the new experiences of humanity. The formation of literary trends and movements in the history of literature aims at exactly this bestowal of meaning to aesthetic differentiations, either via explicit social references or implicitly, as, at first glance, they persist in a more introversive-corporative rupture and differentiation. Yet, in art, such isolation is rather unattainable, as all morphological changes produce changes in content. Hence, every literary trend, as a cultural phenomenon, constitutes a manifestation with sociopolitical references. Every request for aesthetic changes covers a conscious differentiation of the relationship between the individual and society. As Morris (2003: 9-10, 14-16) states this distinction corresponds to the imprint of a new balance in the sociocultural reality of any era (Wilson, 1992: 41-42).

However, the most complete presentation of trends in literature as cultural products and the rationale for conflicting or converging aspects of the continuous dialectics evolving within the history of literature is put forward by Bourdieu (1980: 111). He claims that social groups identify themselves by means of their differences, which are inscribed on a cultural level. The above differences are defined against what lies closer to each group, because proximity emphasizes the threat. Group superiority is imposed and validated as an inscribed concept of de-codifying reality via the cultural basis (Cros, 2010: 224-225).

In essence, this view marks the connection of aesthetics and politics, claiming that modern art evolves in the form of an open dialogue and the raising of objections realized in literary writing against literary tradition. Although it detains its autonomy, the area of literature occupies part of the dialectics and conflicting mentalities within the cultural and political circumstances. As tools for the study and scientific grouping or conscious schematizations of the writers’ self-organization with a social and aesthetic reference, literary schools emphatically demonstrate the immediate relation between cultural structures and the literary output.

The self-adherence or hetero-adherence of important authors to specific categories/schools is socially significant, because a particular stance towards an aesthetic issue, represented by a school, corresponds to the

conscious study of an aesthetic form, with which she\he converses and accepts or rejects. As vehicles of ideological burden and cultural tradition, or as intermediaries of literary motifs, the aesthetic rules of an era reflect a deep interaction between social groups and individuals, who at times may reject the above elements in the structure of their works, sometimes they accept and reinforce them, or only employ them after sufficient tailoring. In any case, every option constitutes an aesthetic position with various repercussions and consequences in the history of literature, as well as in the history of the cultural reality. It also establishes a criterion for the shaping of any posterior literary trend, which, to quote Althusser (2013: 152), includes the ideology of the social groups that it has expressed.

Bourdieu's position cannot be fully evaluated separately from the appreciation of two other schools: the school of Constance (an heir of the Prague Linguistic Circle) and the Reading Theories. The present study co-articulates to the position of Mucarovsky (1983), who distinguishes, in the semiologic event that constitutes a literary text, on the one hand the material work itself, and on the other its interpretation by any collective consciousness. This interpretation, characterized as an aesthetic object, is liable to transformative processing under the influence of certain factors, among which an outstanding position is held by the evolution of the literary field itself, together with criticism and the renewal of aesthetic rules. Yet, in these assumptions, we cannot ignore the influence of social structures, since both the language of the text and the ideological projections through aesthetic codes indicate the social dimension of art (Cros, 2010: 341).

It is exactly this dimension in Mucarovsky's work that will be stressed by Jauss (1995: 118), one of the founders of Reading Theories, while Bourdieu will suggest an even broader perspective, remarking that literary history presumably stands on the aesthetics of a created sensation and reception. A literary work cannot be presented as a structure independent of its reception, simply as an aesthetic object. Consequently, it can only be described in the series of its consecutive forms. Jauss comments that the role of the reader, as an individual and part of a social structure, affects the work through her\his overall knowledge and everyday life experiences. The dynamics of this view is crucial, since it enables a text, which has served the demands of a particular social group, to allow another social group to pursue its own claims via its own aesthetic projection, perhaps even to supersede the ideological parents of previous readings.

By means of such a perception, we can comprehend culturally and sociopolitically how the revival of artistic movements is possible, as older forms can impose pressure on the ruling class through aesthetic renovation. (Bourdieu, 2006: 403-407) That is, the prevailing social group strives to establish itself culturally and linguistically, as, for example, in the aftermath of the 1789 French Revolution, the new status quo attempted to impose a uniform language and dress code (Burke, 2009: 220)/ Another case, indicating the co-relation between aesthetics and social structure is the work of Dostoyevsky. According to Bakhtin, the polyphony of the work mirrors an age of conflicts, followed by an autocratic regime (Clark & Holquist, 1984: 84-90). In a similar manner, the intellectual structure of the society after World War I, and the attempt to suppress personal identity, is also recorded in the cultural transition from realism to modernism, demonstrated in the manner reality is perceived by the heroes of Joyce and Proust (Hall, 1990: 126-127).

Under this prism, trends and literary movements are no more than embodiments of the principles and values of the oppressed or of rising social groups, who are eager to express their aesthetic perception of reality, by criticizing previous authority. Even during eras of distinction between popular and high art, a difference which has always been valid to a certain extent, lower classes, whose claims are identified with their cultural models, demand power or prepare revolt. For this interaction between ideology and social claims to be comprehended, one need only study the impact of folk songs in 1800 pre-revolutionary Greece, as they shaped the ideology of the revolution, by promoting the formation of national conscience and exaggerating the cultural differences between the Greeks and their Turkish conquerors (Kapsomenos, 2008).

#### **IV. The setting of boundaries between distinguishable literary schools as an epistemological tool, and the authors' stance**

Moullas (1993: 83) marks that the ideology of a trend, a generation, or even an aesthetic or ideological climate is not defined or encompassed between two dates. For this reason, it is often remarked that the setting of boundaries and categorizations by experts – who either agree with the options of particular authors and follow them to a certain degree or refrain from them – are conventions and methodological tools that evaluate an era or a direction at a specific historic moment. In the intellectual environment which is being formed, survivals of the past are preserved, eventually ascertaining the advent of a new era. A *period*, and a *style*, are significant not only for what they dismiss or establish, but also for what they portend.

By the term of *style* we generally define the options of narrative and the creative process through which the theme is expressed. It is often confused with *expression* and is still a criterion for the positive or negative evaluation of texts aspiring to the title of literature (Aragis, 1998: 56). Yet, the authors' evaluations vary, because they have a tendency to break free from the limitations of language, theme and style, especially if they do not belong to the avant-garde of a particular aesthetic.

Thus, we usually observe an emphatic or discreet reaction/disbelief of authors in front of the conventions of data and research or the attempts of their colleagues to place them within a particular aesthetic formation. This does not necessarily imply that authors are always right. At least, it cannot be proved that researchers, even if they fail to reach absolute conclusions, are completely wrong. At any rate, authors participate in the evaluation of the literary past, since they can reveal prolific influences from the past in their work. These influences may not have an immediate evaluating character, yet, they indicate which works of the past had been the forerunners of later trends (Aragis, 1998: 62). For example, Flaubert takes a distance from realism, due to the one-sided populism and materialism the movement was blamed for. He even refused to be defined as a realist, even though *Madame Bovary* acquires narrative objectivity by rendering an exact representation of the world with an emphasis on determinism (Travers, 1998: 59; Rey, 1996: 105-111).

It would be as well to remember that there is no clear date for the “death” of European romanticism or the birth of realism, nor is there any date defining the “death” of realism and naturalism in Europe and America. In the history of letters, there is only continuity and a spiral itinerary. For instance, in romanticism we can detect the latent sperm of further evolution towards a cruder realism, and another interval of time during which these two go along together, converge or conflict, producing new syntheses dominated by novelty. Terzakis (1955: 11) observes that in the same year that “Hernani” by Verdi came on stage and was later printed as a book, 1831, Stendhal published *The Red and the Black*. Similarly, Balzac, the founder of realism in his native country, is at the same time considered to be a genuine prose writer of the romantic school (Pellissier, 1897:308-309). This realization is valuable, because the combination of elements from various literary movements is frequent in authors, even those most consciously positioned within a particular artistic movement.

Besides, as Lukács remarks, all great works reveal a tendency to surpass their genre and their era. I.e., Flaubert’s success is due to a turn to the external world, thus overcoming the lyrical character of former prose writing (Lukacs, 2004: 170-171). Consequently, to a certain degree, one can justify or excuse the insistence of many authors to refuse being placed within specific aesthetic schemes, as this would limit or decrease the scope of their writings.

However, it is obvious that the shaping of a new historic and cultural situation normally presupposes a new writing style. The novelty brought about by any literary direction of the time, either consolidated into a school or not, proves that each era may encompass tradition, yet on no occasion does real art produce copies. Needless to say, the object of literature is the world and life in a variety of aspects. According to Hall, as a form of art, literature affects the social whole, fashioning moral rules and models, despite the fact that the greatest part of literary writing does not aim at the imposition of social rules, but at venting social criticism. Via imagination, literature may delve deeper into the actual structure of societies, through intimate convictions of individuals making up social groups (Hall, 1990: 73-74). At an instance when a new generation puts forward such claims facing its own kind of reality, it is natural to converse with and study previous morphological and thematic directions of literary tradition, in order to locate differences and similarities with the past, and thus mould its own aesthetics.

It is exactly this continually open dialectics between the literary present and the past, tradition and creative production, severance and correlation between literary trends, either as theoretic cultural constructs or as the authors’ aesthetic manifestos, which we imply by the term *influence*. The concept of influence is fundamental in current theory and research about the creative interchange of techniques and thematic motifs between two cultural systems with different linguistic codes. We can define influences as “a subtle and mysterious mechanism through which one work assists the gestation of another” (Brunel, Pichois & Rousseau, 2003: 110). Of course, we have to distinguish accidental imitation from generative imitation, which is original creation, provided that the artist utilizes another’s individuality. In any case, comparative research must bear in mind the “ideology”, i.e. the “representational system that a society creates for itself in connection to reality”. In this manner, people are enriched by distilling principles and values, through long term procedures that renew the intellectual and cultural reality of their time (Brunel, Pichois & Rousseau, 2003: 94-95; Benoit-Dusausoy & Fontaine, 1999: 463).

It must be understood that new things are born out of old or out of a fragment of older traditions. Nevertheless, they cannot be identical to the past, because they belong to another time-phase, to another social framework. Regressions or discontinuities, gaps and repetitions, may partly exist, but no identification between two points, one of which is subsequent and another which precedes it. Any analogy will have to be based on a kind of influence that the old exerts on the new. Of particular import on the issue of influence and the connection between literature and cultural condition is the theory of mentalities, referring to unconscious attitudes and daily actions, the spontaneous performance of which may mislead one to consider them as unalterable, though they are constantly changing. The theory of mentalities is related by many to the collective unconscious, thus attaching a psychoanalytic dimension to literary theory and its connection to cultural reality. Thus, every social construct is shaped through a patchwork of opposing propensities, whose rivalry leads to the production of works. The latter encase existent ruptures and discontinuities, bridging gaps within literary texts, while they themselves are being modeled into solid structures within literary movements (Delcroix & Hallyn, 2000: 295-296).

The literary and cultural present contains the seed or integral parts of past opinions and perceptions indicating how dynamical and functional an earlier school can be to the artistic expression of any present time. Bakhtin's position on the "polyphony" of the novel is of interest on the issue. His point of departure is that society prevails upon individuals, if we take a novel to be a sociohistoric entity. Bakhtin refuses to separate social dimensions from the form, as any differentiations in this genre are related to social mutability. In his study on Dostoyevsky, he observes that every text depends on previous ones. He gave to this process the name of dialogic relationship (Delcroix & Hallyn, 2000: 29-30), while Kristeva (1980: 65-69) employed the term of *intertextuality*, to mark this undercurrent, yet lucid dialogue between texts. According to Kristeva, the term *intertext* signifies a literary text "in the interior of which alien formulations meet and clash". As Bakhtin claims, our interest now turns towards the transformative aspect and the dialogic relationships between formulations, as they express an endless dispute and rivalry. There is clearly no tautological relationship between the signs. In addition, the spectrum of relationships, as it unfolds towards the dialectics between literary traditions and the present time, it attaches a new significant and evaluative weight to the formulations (Angelatos, 1993: 9-11; Lenny, 1979). Undoubtedly, this theory examines a new dimension and the depth of interaction between past-present, social constructs- literary trends.

As a result, it becomes the common ground for modern approaches of literary works and literary movements that inside the literary text various systems are constantly being assessed, as it comprises antitheses, conventions, norms and traditions, which are realized in a divergent or convergent manner. This dynamic model has been described as the construction of textual "energy". The observation proves extremely useful, because it contributes to the understanding that literary writing contains both conflicting and combining aesthetic attitudes, the amalgamation of which sets up contemporaneous literary directions (Delcroix & Hallyn, 2000: 32-33).

## **V. Conclusions. The attitude of criticism towards trends in literature, impasses and perspectives**

In the final analysis, authors and literary schools are, to a great extent, products of their era. They express data of their external environment, the objectivity of which will inevitably fail to convince later periods. The way of signifying concepts of "literariness", "literary truth", and of the terms for conducting a dialogue between literature-social structure, within a certain cultural reality and a literary school, are based on a criterion which is constantly changing, due to various literary or extra-literary factors.

Like all cultural fields, ideology and the general sociopolitical occurrences, as dynamic procedures, affect intellectual life and the literary output. In general, the cultural produce, no matter how avant-garde it may be, can never be created regardless of the cultural reality into which it is born and which it inevitably reflects. Consequently, literary movements, as cultural phenomena that appear in a specific historic era, are not self-sown and random. They are immediately connected to the social and political reality of the particular historic period (Karakalos, 1971). It is clear that numerous literary movements would not have been shaped in the way we now know them, had they not followed or gone along with other pioneering discoveries or trends in science, technology and social structuring. It is impossible to separate naturalism from positivism and from the Darwinian Theory, surrealism from the Freudian theory, modernism from Marxist critique and from the social disruption ensuing the World Wars (Paganos, 2002: 47-48).

The power of ideology, the aesthetic and social antitheses of an era, are inscribed in codes and systems of rules composing literary texts and, to some extent, they guide literary writing and its reception, by forcing language to ascribe only the meaning that is reinforced by dominant social forces. In this way, literary ideology is connected to the relationship and opinions of a society concerning literature. Different societies provide different responses to the relationship between literature and reality (McCormick-Gary & Waller, 2000: 246).

Of course, it seems reasonable that, in a social and cultural situation characterized by opposing fields and demands, writers, as much as critics, in voicing their own aesthetics, are directed by various motives, not necessarily of an inter-literary nature. For example, this is obvious in the evaluation of post-war writings of N. Kasdaglis and A. Kotzias by left-wing critics (Kordatos, 1962: 753). Moreover, authors tend to accept or be accepted in a school with criteria beyond their literary capacity and relevant to sociopolitical motivation or simply prescribed by personal ambition (Lagarde & Michard, 1969: 476-477).

Thus, a mature critic or researcher will have to consider the authors' self-references and their theoretic or critical views, but with great caution, as writers are often motivated by self-interest or simply cannot view the whole picture because they are restricted in a particular cultural reality. On the other hand, the writer's intention is not capable to define the final aesthetic outcome. According to the analysis by Engels, Balzac is criticizing the aristocratic and bourgeois class, while the author himself had aimed at defending aristocracy (Travers, 1998: 65). For this reason, Argyriou remarks that an author's evaluation and his/her admission, in due time or belated, to a more general artistic movement or generation, is a "variable term", because evaluations can change due to the margin that a distance in time can provide for more sober and expanded approaches focusing on one person or

work, but also on further appreciation of the writing in a generation or a period of some native literary tradition (Argyriou, 1995: 17).

At the same moment, stereotypical or ideological medley is not only latent in critical or theoretic approaches of authors or their contemporary researchers, or only in literary works, but in the terminology itself employed by the philological science for the description and categorizing of schools, authors and works. The history of terms, their ideological strictures or ambiguities, are inherited and survive in the cultural present, constantly affecting the appraisal not only of the literary genres they define, but also their very own worth or durability as critical tools. The ideological components of an era influence not only the literary production, but also the terms through which it is received. One need only trace back the contradictory and variable usage of the terms *realism* and *neorealism* or *neonaturalism* with the signficatory gaps and ideological mirrors that trained generations of researchers to approach works in the manner that these tools defined at the close of 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in order to realize that the way literature is written or studied requires special attention, because it bears ideological and cultural signs that can blur the amplitude and dynamics of the texts. It took some decades before Mitterand (1986) and Hamon (1998), in reference to the above two movements, gave a concrete analysis of the works described by the two terms, and clarified in which way, and under what conditions, the cultural reality of their time influenced the above literary movements and to what extent they preserved or transformed literary tradition.

It is understood that for a critic or researcher to act on their own still further, and soberly approach a text or the dialectics of a generation against earlier aesthetic forms, she/he must have a thorough knowledge of the cultural references and scope of the literary works, their contemporary critics, as well as of the terms employed for the classification of works and authors. In short, the venture demands great versatility of knowledge on the part of the expert, to break free from the authority of preceding criticism. Only then, according to Aragis (1998: 20), is there a chance to discern any idiosyncrasy existing in the text and in the trend she/he is examining.

In the frame of analyzing the dialectics of movements in literature either among one another or with the cultural reality, it is not only authors and critics that get involved, but also literature historians. The latter may set off some invisible sides, provided that they keep their distance from stereotypes and concepts any such terms may carry, as tools that have been linguistically and culturally defined in the past. Thus, it becomes clear that a critical-comparative and impartial attitude, taking into consideration all social and cultural components of literary production, is the only way to approach literary phenomena. If one chooses to entrench oneself behind traditional positions and attach to literary tools significance from materials of the past, then various dimensions of semantic and morphological options, particularly important for literary writing and for the cultural history, will remain in the dark.

On the one hand, a sober approach does not excuse the neglect of social and ideological interweaving of the past in literary evaluation. On the other, a mere cultural reference, exclusively related to the socio-ideological present time, provides no measure of evaluating and classifying tradition. Such phenomena have been observed in the history of cultural and literary criticism. In any case, a critic or historian of literature is obliged to approach literary events interactively, self-conscious of difficulties in the analysis and probing into the dialectics and cultural – literary interchange between cultural systems, either on national or on a timeline level.

Consequently, it takes courage and a thorough examination in order to comprehend the vivid dialogue between the cultural and the literary and, indirectly, social systems in the history of philology. The fear about the faultiness of terms and theories is at the same time balanced by their accuracy in describing literary texts with a specific viewpoint and characteristics. No matter how much they may diverge from the traditional form, they still provide a useful and secure tool of critical analysis (Michailidis, 2016). Researchers need to know in depth all the parameters related to the shaping of a literary phenomenon (school, trend, generation, literary tradition and historic situation), because the theoretic clarification of terms and the exact description of interaction with the cultural atmosphere are necessary stages for a sound approach to the literary production. Under this light, modern researchers ought to examine and justify any convergence or divergence among the literary systems, and their relationship with other cultural manifestations of human intellect, as this specification may lead to new forms of perceiving the importance and diachronicity of literary works.

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