

Editorial

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What we have loved, others will love, and we will teach them how

William Wordsworth, Lyrical Ballads

In 1969 Roland Barthes famously declared: "Literature is what gets taught, one aspect, that's all." (quoted in Eagleton, 1983,194). This oft-cited statement is the starting point for the new academic Journal of Literary Education (JLE) and its inaugural issue whose special focus is Interdisciplinary Links between Children's Literature and the Arts.

Literary Education is now firmly established in all stages of schools, colleges and universities and is considered a legitimate, interdisciplinary and multifaceted field of study. The inaugural issue of JLE is dedicated to the study of Literary Education as an academic discipline which embraces all aspects of reading and teaching literature in different educational contexts and in different languages. Another primal mission of JLE is the study of the fundamental role of literature in the intellectual education for all students of all backgrounds while contributing to the field of knowledge in our global society. Through this study of literature dialog will open to rejuvenate teaching practices, new literacies and radical methodologies. What are the challenges of reading literary texts in the classroom? What are the aims and the methods of this endeavor and what texts should the educators choose in order their students to become confident to engage in individual but also group readings? Students need more opportunities to meaningfully engage with literature and to view/respond to/interpret literary texts in ways never thought of before. In what ways and means can this be achieved?

Moreover, the terminology used to designate the distinctive quality of this field of studies plays a significant role. The term "Literary Education", instead of the narrower "Literature Teaching", intends to draw attention to an overall change of perspective towards a holistic teaching based

on pupils' interests, skills and abilities. It is equally important for Literary Education to cultivate an environment that develops the habit of reading and fosters the literary competence of students. Literary Education in accordance with a general shift towards a student-oriented pedagogy puts emphasis on the learner so that all students are actively involved in the learning process. Robert Scholes (1998, p. 148) argued: "Knowledge that is not usable and regularly used is lost. The knowledge we retain is the knowledge that we can and do employ.". The students should "do" and "learn" literature as something that is useful and essential for their lives.

Literary Education is rooted in a longstanding humanist tradition and meets a range of utilitarian, moral and -to a lesser extent- rhetorical aims. However, since at least the mid of the 20th century, it has been significantly enriched by the proliferation of modern literary/critical theories that have broadened the focus of literary studies, bringing a range of fresh interpretive angles to the process of reading and meaning-making. The various ways we conceive, read, interpret and finally *teach* literature have been radically changed under the influence of modern critical theory. One of the most prominent challenges brought up by various theorists is a change in the conception of the literary text which is from a preconceived and stable entity with ontological value to a dialog. Modern literary theory has helped readers –and mainly students as readers– liberate themselves from the burdensome task of finding a predetermined, singular "hidden meaning" in any literary piece. Readers are not passive recipients of meaning; they rather recreate the meaning drawing from their own knowledge and experience, within the framework provided by the author. Reader-response theories, widely accepted in the field of Literary Education, highlight that a text comes into being only when it is being experienced by the reader. Reader-oriented criticism pays attention to the reader and her active contribution to the process of meaning-making. According to reader-response theorists (L.M. Rosenblatt and W. Iser among others) reading is a dynamic act based on the reciprocity of the literary text and the reader.

The emphasis on the reader's active role in the meaning-making process have encouraged educators to re-conceptualize the student as a unique and active reader who comes to terms with the text and endows it with multiple meanings. JLE aims to focus on the vital relationship between author, reader, and text in educational contexts, but also on the student as individual reader or as a member of the interpretative community of the classroom. JLE also intends to suggest alternative methods of reading, writing and teaching literature by encouraging the dialogue between scholars and educators within an international scope and perspective.

Another fundamental goal of Literary Education is students to construct a sustained plurality of perspectives when negotiating with texts and to become more competent readers. Literary

competence is an essential quality of the student-reader every teacher aspires to, i.e. a reader eager to grapple with the complexities of any given text and to appreciate the symbolic richness of its language, a reader sensitive to the potential impact of literature.

The presentation/inclusion/publication of empirical studies is another contribution of JLE that should be noted. For that purpose, many articles in the present and the forthcoming issues will put emphasis on the actual teaching and didactic approaches that promote students' creativity as well as their ability to think imaginatively and critically about the literary texts.

Interdisciplinary links between Children's Literature and the Arts

What do we mean by "text"? We should possibly clarify what "gets taught" (Barthes, 1969). what is taught in the contemporary classroom is actually a variety of cultural texts, which range from the classics, the canon, popular literature, visual, multimodal or intermedial texts, to various products of popular culture for children and young adults. An idea widely promoted and exercised by the majority of teachers is that students have the right to access as many cultural texts as possible, more importantly those that play an important role in their everyday lives. As we are currently experiencing the transition from the print-based to the digital, hyper-textual culture and communication, the expansion of syllabi / curricula to include a range of established and popular cultural/intermedial texts is an absolute necessity.

The encounter of literature and art and their inter-artistic relation has major theoretical, aesthetical, philosophical and pedagogical implications and it can be traced back to the ancient Greek poet Simonides of Ceos, quoted by Plutarch (*De Gloria Atheniensium* 346f) "painting is mute poetry and mute poetry is a speaking picture". This sentence rephrased in Latin by Horace (*Ars Poetica*, 361–365) as *ut pictura poesis (as is painting so is poetry)* has been often repeated since the Renaissance and is one of the most recurrent themes in the relevant research/field.

The present issue *Interdisciplinary links between Children's Literature and the arts* will make a contribution to the field of inter-artistic studies and education by the exploration of the affinities between (children's) literature and the visual/intermedial arts (fine arts, picturebooks, media texts, animation) and the pedagogical and didactical implications of these affinities for the literature classroom. The majority of articles in this issue highlight the potential for the arts to be functionally incorporated into the teaching of literature, by providing a fruitful ground for the interdisciplinary connection between different (visual, verbal, musical, etc.) semiotic codes.

Professor Perry Nodelman open our first issue with an essay about the relationship between Picturebooks and Art. From his experience as a volunteer guide the author put the question of

how we differently read both forms of art, but above all how Arts exhibition can change our perception of picturebooks.

Collage, and its use in picture book, is the subject that Doctor Viktoria de Rijke develops in her article. From its birth to the contemporary applications in books for children, de Rijke emphasizes the multiple possibilities of this artistic resource and its potential capacity of subversion.

Introducing the relationship between music, art and picturebooks, Doctor Janet Evans writes and how different authors dealt with topics like war, conflict and peace from different starting points. Her article deals with artistic expressions that have been adapted as books for children emphasizing the treatment of Human Rights.

Doctor Mercedes Ariza deals with a different perspective of the relationship between literature and other arts, their translation/adaptation. In her article she analyses how the translation of the Spanish Film *Donkey Xote* implies a deep change in references and other resources.

Polish literature textbooks and the use of art illustrations is the subject that Doctor Justyna Bajda and Dorota Michułka has chosen for their article. They establish categories of relations between words and images as a tool to increase the study of arts from an interdisciplinary perspective and also give clues for its didactic use.

Doctor Rebeca López-González explores another relationship between arts, the intertextualities that we can find in Pixar's animation films. She analyses 14 Pixar's Films in order to study the presence of artistic references including music, painting, publicity or also films, especially abundant in these films.

Literature teaching has a direct impact in the perception of society from students. That is the main conclusion that Doctor Branwen Bingle found in her research in United Kingdom. This impact, besides, has a clear ideological bias that reflect the main concerns of mediators but marginalizing wide sector of society.

Suh Yoon Kim explores the presence of mythology in Greek official textbooks. The authors emphasize the individualism of heroes, with a clear male oriented perspective. The selected excerpts show a preference for male heroes to transmit values related to the personal effort to students and neglect other possibilities like the weakness or hesitation.

In the miscellaneous section, the group of researchers compounded by Petros Panaou, Eunhye Son, Maggie Chase and Stan Steiner deal with a research about animals in a 330 corpus of

children's books. This corpus is based on the Children's Choices books, that is, a selection list made by around 5000 readers all around the USA.

Doctor Catalina Millán close this first issue with a detailed study about Nursery Rhymes characters and its reception in a Spanish context. The author made a set of tests to secondary school pupils to check their knowledge of popular characters in Nursery Rhymes but also its reception.

The majority of educators around the world might agree that reading literature is of great importance for the mental growth, the empathetic cultivation, the linguistic accomplishment and the critical awareness of their students. Through their systematic encounter with literature, students can become –very mainstream, yet genuinely true– better human beings and better citizens. It is undeniable that students no matter their age should have access to a range of authors and texts and should be encouraged to read habitually and with pleasure. Thirty years ago, in 1988, on the occasion of the publication of a collective volume entitled *Teaching Literature: What is Needed Now*, the eminent professor Helen Vendler, echoing Wordsworth, claimed that we should teach students to love what we have loved, that is works of literature. Today, this sounds still convincing and powerful. What was needed then –a loving attitude of students and teachers alike towards literature– is still needed now. After all, incorporating literature in education, reading and teaching literature, or planning engaging literature lessons for students, is an intrinsically motivated endeavor, an inner promise to ourselves that we do the best we can to open up for our students the perspective of using literary reading for the enrichment of ourselves and the vital improvement of our ever-changing world.

We would like to warmly thank everyone who contributed to this issue and to welcome you aboard the *Journal of Literary Education*.

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