

# GENUINE HERMENEUTICS IN THE CANON OF LITERATURE

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*Abstract*

Within this article, we discuss the author’s influential relationship with the literary text and the role of literary critic in the tendencies to replace the first. By dealing, first, with the romantic spirit, then with the progressive concept of modernity, and, finally, with the denying concepts of post-modernity, we argue for the idea that the literary discourse includes the author as a normative and intentional principle to preserve the memory and knowledge, which literature offers to us. The tendency of

the author's denial has resulted in a tendency to deny the tradition, literary canon, and has caused the absurdity of an excess in the necessary methodological apparatus, an excess, which has led to the diminishing of the reading of literature, fading of its social status, and harming the utilitarian recognition of authors who form the dignity and identity of Western culture. We attempt to explain that canonical literary texts should be recognized through posterior criticism, their placing in historical time, and their reflections on our own time, in which they obtain new meanings, while preserving the stabilized meanings of iconic authors.

*Keywords:* philosophy of literature, hermeneutics, tradition, timeless present, canon, utilitarian ethics.

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### **Pristna hermenevtika znotraj kanona literature**

#### *Povzetek*

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V članku obravnavamo avtorjev vplivni odnos do literarnega besedila in vlogo literarnega kritika z njegovo tendenco, da bi zamenjal avtorja. S tem da se spoprime, najprej, z romantičnim duhom, nato s progresivnim pojmom modernosti in, slednjič, z zanikovalnim konceptom postmoderne, zagovarjamo idejo, da literarni diskurz vključuje avtorja kot normativen in intencionalen princip, ki ohranja spomin in vednost, kakršna nam ponuja literatura. Rezultat tendence po zanikanju avtorja je tendenca, da bi zanikali tradicijo, literarni kanon, in absurдни razmah nujnega metodološkega aparata, razmah, kakršen je pripeljal do zmanjšanja branja literature, zatona njenega družbenega statusa in zmaličenja utilitarnega pripoznanja avtorjev, ki oblikujejo dostojanstvo in identiteto zahodne kulture. Skušamo pojasniti, da bi kanonična literarna besedila morala biti pripoznana s pomočjo kasnejšega kriticizma, njihove umestitve v zgodovinski čas in njihove refleksije našega lastnega časa, znotraj katerega pridobijo nove pomene, medtem ko obenem ohranjajo utrjene pomene ikoničnih avtorjev.

*Ključne besede:* filozofija literature, hermenevtika, tradicija, brezčasna prisotnost, kanon, utilitarna etika.

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## Introduction

At the end of his study and academic cycle, the well-known structuralist and post-structuralist thinker Tzvetan Todorov, published—so to speak, as a testamentary *mea culpa*—two works regarding the field of literature studies, where he foresaw the risk that threatens the study of literature. This risk, according to Todorov, comes from the “theorizing” (Todorov 2007, 25) excess and the insisting on “formalistic techniques,” (Todorov 2010, 60–90) which have isolated the literary text from communication and from the basic concept of providing the reader some satisfaction. If in the 1960s, upon the principles of freedom of the reader—the freedom, which reached to his (reader’s) definition as the producer of the text—the literary author, legacy, and literary morality was attacked, extreme theorization and formalization—looking at the historical course—placed literary art, its ethics, to the “Procrustean bed.” The testamentary lament of Tzvetan Todorov seems to be grounded, although it comes from the fear of “the death of literature.” We will argue that, in the historical line, this crisis is based on the tendency of changing and replacing the roles of the author, the work, and the reader, that is to say, their traditional order, the substitution of which has caused an ethical issue ending up in a philosophical and ideological problem. The author’s presence in literary discourse has never been missing, even if the author “lives” (only) in the implicit or explicit world of text, whether published or unpublished in the publishing world. Therefore, we speak of the “author as a recreator,” since we know that the author of literature does not have the power to create *ex nihilo* and thus does not intend to be the image of God. Nevertheless, the writing process itself implies an ethical icon, which is related to a human agency that we call “author,” which in its essence does not have to do with the authorship. The latter concept rather implies the assuming of responsibility, and it is connected to the means of dissemination.

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### 1. Philosophy of recreation

Despite the perpetual presence of the author as a philosophical concept, in the Western culture especially Romanticism strengthened the author as the sole normative and ethical principle of literary discourse, it even gave him

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the role of the bearer and canonizing figure of tradition, as well as the role of the researcher in the theater of human memory and imagination. Thus, Romanticism, despite the desire for the autonomy of the literary text, did not repress the author's presence as an influence on the reader. Moreover, as within the "Abrams triangle," the communication form of the work is subjected to the circulation between the "work in the center and the actants within it" in the complex relation between the "artist," "the audience," and "the universe" (Abrams 1971, 6) as the ethics of mimetics and creative poetics. In addition, Abrams, when discussing the acting forces within Romanticism, such as the concepts of the traditional and the revolutionary, emphasizes that the latter one emerges only as a secularized form of artistic imagination based on the power of religiousness (Abrams 1973). This means that the philosophical tendency of opening up to secularization, demanded by the scientific and genre fragmentation of identity, has not managed to philosophically separate the literal verb from its mythical, philosophical, religious, and historical provenience, hence, from the role of the author as the carrier of this

402 "heteroglossia" (Bakhtin 2006, 263).

The phenomenon of author's relationship with the tradition, of exiting from the anonymity in the light of author as being responsible for the new literary form, strengthens the concept of "author as a recreator." For Northrop Frye, the notion of "recreation" is suitable, since as such it joins—in the writing process—"the vision of the tradition of art in the past, and the vision of an idealized society projected on the future. Both these visions, I suggested, arise from a partial release of repression, a qualified escape from the encumbrances of ordinary experience." (Frye 1980, 47–48.) As it turns out, based on this finding, the author as a recreator in his writing escapes from the ordinary experience, which necessarily implies a status of his particular dignity and identity, furthermore, a transfer of a historical consciousness, both of identity or of general consciousness. Correspondingly, this type of author preserves the balance between tradition and novelty, keeping the literary recreation process in a permanent crisis.

The phenomenological concept of Ricoeur known as "refiguration" approaches the concept of "recreation," through which the French researcher builds the scheme of what the narrative text offers us:

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Three moments need to be considered then, to which correspond three neighboring, yet distinct, disciplines: (1) the strategy as concocted by the author and directed toward the reader; (2) the inscription of this strategy within a literary configuration; and (3) the response of the reader considered either as a reading subject or as the receiving public. (Ricoeur 1988, 160.)

If the author offers a strategy, which he realizes in the literary composition (configuration), it is the reader, as a reading subject, who, respecting the first two categories, i.e., the author, lives in the world of a hermeneutic “refiguration” of the text.

However, let us look at some models of rejection of this type of author, which turned into strong references for the literary interpretation itself, as well as for its classroom teaching.

Philosophies of modernity—in their different variations—have as an objective of aesthetic interest strengthened the denial of the “author’s intentionality” in the literary text, the denial of the “author’s role” in the literary critic’s literary analysis, the denial of biography, history, and literary sociology as a rejection of positivism, but have guaranteed enormous freedom to the reader, where the latter was always designated as a literary interpreter and researcher. This poetics and aesthetics intended a kind of utilitarian autonomy of creativity for the investigation and study of the literary phenomena as a self-sufficient art.

In his famous essay *Tradition and the Individual Talent*, T. S. Eliot maintains the author’s concept as a recreator, but introduces the concept of impersonality when he offers a philosophical opinion that

[...] the emotion of art is impersonal. And the poet cannot reach this impersonality without surrendering himself wholly to the work to be done. And he is not likely to know what is to be done unless he lives in what is not merely the present, but the present moment of the past, unless he is conscious, not of what is dead, but of what is already living. (Eliot 1948, p. 22.)

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Eliot's impersonality implies a creative maturity, which means fleeing from a poetic lamentation, as well as the maturity of a literary critic who should not be influenced by author's biography, but should analyze the aesthetics of the text from an *a posteriori* side. This connection with the text does not forget tradition, since Eliot considered the writer's and critic's activity, from a philosophical viewpoint, as "a present moment of the past," as an awareness that the classical authors also recreate us as readers of the Western literary canon, and consequently enable the continuation of authorial recreation. Eliot's viewpoint regarding the presence of tradition in the literary present and the care of criticism as *phronesis*, and not just as a "theory," follows F. R. Leavis, who in the essays collected in his work *Revaluation*, published in 1936, states that "in dealing with individual poets the critic, whether explicitly or not, is dealing with tradition, for they live in it" (Leavis 1998, 3).

404 Apparently, T. S. Eliot and Leavis demonstrate that the social role of literature, in addition to aesthetic pleasure, has to do with the preservation of a high form of literary morality as a sign of care and respect of the living towards the deceased, transformed into symbols of Western culture. Therefore, we do not relate the morality of literature with religious morality, doctrine, or teleological teachings. However, on the basis of the literary phenomenon as a *differentia specifica* and on the basis of literary heritage, we believe in a specific ontological morality of the literary culture itself. Literary morality is related more to the ancient notion of *phronesis* (prudence), which, viewed in life and art, implies denying the dominance of pleasure and pain as a care for morality. Since, as Aristotle says:

if someone is corrupted because of pleasure or pain, no [appropriate] principle can appear to him, and it cannot appear that this is the right goal and cause of all his choice and action; for vice corrupts the principle. And so, prudence must be a state grasping the truth, involving the reason, and concerned with action about human goods. (Aristotle 1999, 90.)

Besides, we think that literature, and the literary canon, possesses a permanent demand for a specific form of truth. It should be emphasized that

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T. S. Eliot likewise expressed this morality as prudence in his implicit request for the preservation of Christian religious heritage as being an authentic part of European culture, in order to protect it from the dominance of political doctrines in culture. Such a protection of heritage took place at the time when two great ideological doctrines were escalating in the Western culture, namely Nazism and Communism, which replaced the religious cult with a cult of man, and when in the name of democracy there was pressure for various line-ups, aiming to change the evolutionary order in the European society. According to Eliot, a culture should include the God's icon, because

[...] the term "democracy," as I have said again and again, does not contain enough positive content to stand alone against the forces that you dislike—it can easily be transformed by them. If you will not have God (and He is a jealous God) you should pay your respects to Hitler or Stalin." (Eliot 1960, 50.)

The fear of the politicization of culture, consequently of the literary art, was not unfounded in modernism, because its philosophical intent was experimentation and play with tradition to the extent of a requirement that art would not entertain any reference points to the past, in order to achieve a specific autonomy of the new literary form. However, this escape from tradition led, at the time of ideological hegemony, to the phenomenon where art, and thus also literature, failed to stand with regard to politics. The British scholar of modernity Pericles Lewis says that "in the Western democracies the sense of impending crisis resulting from the rise of communism and then of fascism and Nazism led intellectuals to feel that the time had come to take sides in the struggle" (Lewis 2007, 224). This phenomenon, apparently, happens because ideologies, viewed in the philosophical and literary development, always ruin the balance between the permanent communication of the old with the new, and vice versa. This lack of equilibrium touched the literary morality and, hence, also the inherited ethics of the author as a recreator. However, traditional literary thought preserved the biological concept of the phenomenon of literary criticism, namely that a posterior literary interpretation should, as ethics, pay attention to the author and that criticism with a utilitarian goal

should serve the joy of reading. The author's authority, even when it aimed at aesthetical or stylistic interpretation of the text, was protected by the literary critic, who was aware that the literary text is not a critic's product, but the author's product, and that literary criticism, as paralleling the literary work, is a "special knowledge," which, besides the author's voice, carries onwards the voices of the dead, inherited religiousness and morality.

## 2. Philosophy of indecision

406 However, a conceptual change in relation to the literary tradition and the role of the critic occurred in the 60s of the previous century as a result of the phenomenon of structuralism. We call it a phenomenon, because, as the French historian François Dosse teaches, structuralism was an unprecedented development within the French intelligentsia from the 1950s–60s. This unprecedented movement can be explained as a willingness to advance the progressive concept, the development, and the merging of social sciences with the goal of relativizing classical human studies. Dosse says that structuralism "expressed a certain degree of self-hatred, of the rejection of traditional Western culture, and of a desire for modernism in search of new models" (Dosse 1997, xx). Moreover, the force of progression became even more powerful, when this phenomenon was disseminated on the Trans-Atlantic level and became "part of the human undergraduate departments" (Windschutle 1997, 7–39), where the philosophical demand of a "search of the new models" overshadowed philological, historical, and identity knowledge, and where the researchers alias literary critics were left a space of authority, of a nihilistic and ironic re-dimensioning of tradition. Moreover, this kind of authorship was "legitimated" with the role of the reader as a literary critic. An example of this philosophy of denial of the author, and consequently of tradition, is the conceptuality of the French thinkers Roland Barthes, who proclaimed "the author's death as an ethical intent," as well as Michel Foucault, who, upon the concept of "historical fictionality," invented the notion of the "author function" within the human discourse as a tendency for the implementation of the neo-myth philosophy, as a utopian return into the discourse world of anonymity. Roland Barthes's conclusion is well-known, when he writes "we know that to give writing its

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future, it is necessary to overthrow the myth: the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author” (Barthes 1977, 148), whereas Michel Foucault’s conclusion that “he [the author] must assume the role of the dead man in the game of writing” (Foucault 1999, 175) includes the denial of the traditional concept of history, that is, of documenting the tradition, by insisting: “I am well aware that I have never written anything but fictions.” (Foucault 1980, 193.)

In fact, the tendency towards textual-structural analysis with the aesthetic and philosophical insistence, that is, through an extraordinary game of theorization and relativization, became a model of the denial of the complex relationship of the literary text with the world beyond it, and saw the reader as a manufacturer of the meanings of text and not as lovers of meanings derived from the literary text.

We emphasize the author’s denial, for it is exactly the author who, as an authority, as a human agency, recreates identity, dignity, and continuity of the tradition. The denial of the subject(ivity) of the author implies the denial of ethics and tradition, which consequently shifted from the traditional (Horatian) aesthetics to a type of extreme ideology of theorizing.

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This ideology of theorizing was further reinforced by the re-authentication of Friedrich Nietzsche’s philosophies, predominantly of the criticisms of the values of traditional Christian morality as well as of the reinforcing of individual’s freedom and philosophy of the *Overman* (Nietzsche 1966, 286), re-established by Jacques Derrida, maneuvering the notions of “deconstruction” and “difference,” which in relation to religion, and consequently to tradition, exert the pressure of denial, its unbounding, by proclaiming the instability of every stabilized signifier. Concentrating on the dissolution and destabilization of the canon, Derrida’s deconstruction of tradition only reaffirms the “Nietzschean nihilism” by adapting it to the demands of post-modernity for the “bricolage” philosophy and the irony of the memory of symbols.

We are already aware of the expansion of this spirit in the teaching of philosophy, and of literature, on the Trans-Atlantic level, and of the influence of this philosophical game in the tendency to deny and un-braid the canonical tradition. What was the influence of this “ideology of despair” (Melichar 1988, 366) on the social status of literature and its reading?

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The ideology of theorizing influenced the circumstance that “along with the instructional methods of several generations the critical approaches dominant in academic literary study in recent decades seem to have little connection to the value many experience in reading literary texts” (Bruns 2011, 7). As a consequence of this detachment from respecting the value and morality of the literary text, the “appreciation of reading” of literary texts has somehow been compromised. On this basis, Cristina Vischer Bruns defends literary reading as a fundamental value, for literary “reading is valuable for individuals and for society because it functions as an especially effective occasion for re-working our conceptions of ourselves and others” (Bruns 2011, 37).

408 Concepts with scientific claims of formalism, structuralism, post-structuralism, etc., applied to the poetic nominations of literature, romanticism, modernism, late modernism, post-modernism, and post-postmodernism, applied in the school and converted into a library in itself, have almost influenced that the overwhelming adventure of pretentious scientific proveniences were turned into a veritable mania and, in certain cases, became self-sufficient. The literary text was often turned into a tool or a starting point to prove theoretical knowledge without appreciating its morality, which was based on its author, his tradition, and ethics. The intention to realize scientific theorizing has, in a sense, almost punished art and culture, due to the judgement that art and culture are not science and man should be inclined towards science. However, the English philosopher Roger Scruton says that

[...] although culture isn't science, it is nevertheless a conscious activity of the critical mind. Culture—both the high culture of art and music and the wider culture embodied in a moral and religious tradition—sorts ideas by their intrinsic qualities, helps us to feel at home in the world and to resonate to its personal significance. (Scruton 2017, 13.)

Moral and religious tradition is the force of inheritance, which, despite the tendency to replace literary humanity with the adventure of scientific notions, has managed to preserve the concept of author-figure as an obligatory ethics. Although the philosophies of the *post*-s, like post-author, post-intentionality,

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post-literature, post-oeuvre, etc., experienced expansion and became fashionable (mainly until the 1990s), it is precisely the authority of the author, based on the cultural, traditional, and religious morality that challenges this period of indecision and calls forth the obligation of the European-Western cultural heritage to avoid falling from the theater of memory into the theater of forgetfulness. Thus, as human beings, as Scruton says, “we recognize obligations to those who depend on us and on whom we depend, and we exist at the center of a sphere of accountability, which stretches out from us with dwindling force across the world of other people” (Scruton 2017, 98).

### **3. The timeless present**

We are born and grown in the sphere of accountability, and this force, when related to the love of reading and to the well-known concept of systematic reading of literature as a way of life, anyhow, despite scientific demands, requires morality and responsibility over the works and authors who, forming Western culture, have formed both us as well as our own time. Here, we are talking about the canon of the authors or the canonical works, which, living as classics, necessarily live zero time. The zero time of literary canon implies their permanence, and consequently their classroom teaching should preserve the author’s ethics, morality, and religiosity of this legacy. We believe that the teaching of classics cannot be done with the nihilistic or deconstructionist tendency of its use just to produce interesting notions and games that seek only a sort of media popularity. The teaching of the classics requires philology, the utilitarian form of reading, which in the concept of Ernst Robert Curtius unites Western culture. Western culture from Homer to today, according to Curtius, lives on “common topics.” As such, for its understanding the historical observation is essential, it therefore requires the assistance of classical philology, which does not use the text to produce notions, but reads the text, in order to enter the world of utilitarian hermeneutics, from which only emerge authorial ethics and poetics. Because

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[...] we have a truly ontological relationship and real participation in an intellectual entity. But a book, apart from everything else, is a “text.”

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One understands it or one does not understand it. Perhaps it contains “difficult” passages. One needs a technique to unravel them. Its name is philology. (Curtius 2013, 36.)

Thus, philology is not that “method,” which, in the Derridean sense, deconstructs the text, but it is the knowledge that aims at systematic reading of literary forms, from which derive the meanings of literary permanence. This form of reading is enabled by the phenomenon of literary tradition itself or what Curtius calls “timeless present.” He states: “The ‘timeless present,’ which is an essential characteristic of literature means that the literature of the past can always be active in that of the present.” Thus, it would seem that Curtius, being aware of the role of the literary tradition, even for the preservation of human morality and religiousness, stipulates that “a community of great authors throughout the centuries must be maintained if a kingdom of the mind is to exist at all” (Curtius 2013, 397).

410 Accordingly, the reading of a literary canon must be effectuated, in order to keep alive the kingdom of mind of the force, which gives meaning to human life and not to a certain number of teachers who think that literature is self-sufficient (and, if it teaches anything at all, teaches us only suffering).

On the basis of an awareness that literature, after all, is not a self-sufficient phenomenon, but retains the ethics of human agency and is a special form of recognition, the British scholar Harold Bloom, as being closely acquainted with “the stars of the assassination of the subject,” in 1994 published the utilitarian work *The Western Canon*, which almost restores the tradition of Curtius, Eliot, and Leavis’s studies; moreover, it connects the cultural links with the romantic poetry to the antique and classical traditions of Western literature and culture. Through a utilitarian study and criticism, Harold Bloom returns to his concept of the “anxiety of influence” and, on the foundation of personal experience, re-establishes an awareness of Western literary canon as a request for the defeating of loneliness, for a living in the theater of memory and witnessing the lifetime of the author.

The death of the author, proclaimed by Foucault, Barthes, and many clones after them, is another anticanonical myth [...] [T]he Canon

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is indeed a gauge of vitality, a measurement that attempts to map the incommensurate [...] Without the Canon we cease to think. (Bloom 1994, 40–41.)

Based on this logic, it turns out that our traditional and cultural thinking, as a continuum of the cult of aesthetics, and of the pleasure of reading, arises from the canon, from the authors of the Western civilization, from Homer to Franz Kafka, for instance, and much less from sociologists and psychologists who deal with literature and build over it the theories for human condition.

Additionally, since we live in the continuous expansion of information technology, which has given rise to discussions of the threat to our memory due to such transformations in the world of human media communication, we hereby recall the observations of Umberto Eco, who, in a lecture held during the reopening of the Library of Alexandria, through a dosage of humor, said:

In the course of many interviews I have been obliged to answer questions of this sort: “Will the new electronic media make books obsolete? Will the Web make literature obsolete?” [...] “No, keep cool, everything is OK” [...] If you tell such people that books, literature, authorship will not disappear, they look desperate. Where, then, is the scoop? To publish the news that a given Nobel Prize winner has died is a piece of news; to say that he is alive and well does not interest anybody—except him, I presume. (Eco 2003.)

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This remark by Umberto Eco has nothing to do with the “conservative nostalgia,” but with the immanence of the phenomenon of our complex relationship with tradition. The author and the work, literary morality and religiosity, that specific religiosity, which requires the reader’s faith, and then the reader as a constant seeker of beauty, through which he ennobles his life, are the basic elements that keep alive dignity and identity of literary discourse. Human agency, by nature, possesses a demand for recognition (*thymos*), a requirement, which in the literary work of art comes out as experience, either as a mythical one or as a legacy of religion, either as morality or as a human requirement for the protection of identity causes. Consequently, classical

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works, within the phenomenon of timeless present, always call for re-readings and reassessment in various times and spaces. This presence, this essence, is not relativized by new forms of communication, which cannot touch the essences of human categories.

This is what Umberto Eco repeats, who, although in his creative and study zenith, was a powerful admirer of postmodernism, moreover, of theories of communication and hyperrealism, just before his passing, proves that this ideology has exerted influence on the European society causing it to end up in an inexplicable form of cultural confusion. In his work *Chronicles of a Liquid Society*, he blames for this “decadence” in particular the insistence of protection of the inheritance of postmodernism, when he says:

The liquid society begins to take shape with the movement known as postmodernism, an umbrella term that brings together a great variety of phenomena, from architecture to the philosophy of literature, not always in a coherent fashion. Postmodernism signalled the crisis of “grand narratives,” each of which had claimed that one model of order could be superimposed on the world; it devoted itself to a playful or ironic reconsideration of the past and was woven in various ways with nihilistic tendencies. (Eco 2017, 2–3.)

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The tendency of denial, of the play and relativization of values, set forth in the icon of Western culture, realized through the apparatus of the notions of human knowledge, where literary art was used as a medium for maneuvering theoretical knowledge, has influenced a crisis the utilitarian goal of literature itself. This crisis, caused by often tendentious over-interpretation, has, however, incited famous scholars, defenders of their doctrines against author, authority, great narrations, etc., in the end to reshape their attitudes by accepting the author’s presence, the ethics of the text through an appeal to the pleasure of reading.

One can find a kind of *mea culpa* present in the later stances of Roland Barthes, Jacques Derridas and Tzvetan Todorov, who seem to have contributed to the situation of the “liquid society.” Roland Barthes, later onward, says: “It is my joy to encounter in this place the memory or presence of authors dear to me

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and who have taught me at the Collège de France” (Barthes 2007, 458), while Jacques Derrida accepts “the gradual death of deconstruction” (Mitchell 2007, 224) and Umberto Eco openly explains the philosophy of postmodernism by saying: “the postmodern reply to the modern consists of recognising that the past, since it cannot really be destroyed, because its destruction leads to silence, must be revisited: but with irony, not innocently” (Eco 1994, 67). Yet, the most emphatic *mea culpa* comes from Tzvetan Todorov, who writes:

It is a good bet that Rousseau, Stendhal, and Proust will be well-known to readers long after the names of today’s theorists and their conceptual constructs will be forgotten, and we reveal a certain lack of humility when we teach our own theories about works rather than the works themselves. We—specialists, critics, professors—are most of the time only dwarfs perched on the shoulders of giants. (Todorov 2007, 21.)

On this occasion, as an exit from the reading crisis and lack of knowledge of the literary tradition, Todorov proposes that the theoretical structural apparatus should change its position. Rather than being a primary tool, it needs to accept the role of a secondary tool, therefore, to take its place only as help, when necessary, for the interpretation of the text, while always favoring the pleasure of reading.

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We are already a century of historical distance away from the writing of the well-known essay of T. S. Eliot, *Tradition and Individual Talent* (1919), and this memory necessarily urges us to think of the possibility or need of a re-dimensioning of the role of the critic, consequently of our approach to the tradition of literature, of our relationship with the canon and literature in general. The key question arising here is related to the correct understanding of Eliot’s observations on the constant care for tradition, yet without damaging the aesthetic concept of literary autonomy, which is based on the permanent power of “the present moment of the past,” but also of his musings on taking care that literary creation as well as literary criticism are not “personal,” but “impersonal.” Many can understand and misunderstand Eliot’s impersonal concept as a loss of personality, but Eliot clearly said: “the poet cannot reach

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this impersonality without surrendering himself wholly to the work to be done” (Eliot 1948, 22).

Therefore, the high degree of impersonality in art can only be achieved by those who have personality. As far as the role of critic, alias literature researcher, we have to take into account the statement of Christoph Bode who claims: “To put it in more general terms: Without a sense of purpose and without an idea of ourselves as critics there can be no genuine evaluation.” (Bode 1989, 324.) This philosophy of preferring the reading of canon as well as of respecting the symbols of tradition, the author as its creator, the ethics of the text, and the authentic *a posteriori* evaluation of the literary text, enables normal communication with memory, which means, enables normal communication with our values. Additionally, an escape from theoretical over-interpretation, from the absurdity of the plurality of notions, would perhaps help literature not to lie onto the “Procrustean bed.”

## Conclusion

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Within this paper on the principles of the philosophy of literature, we discussed the author’s influential relationship with the literary text as well as the role of the literary critic in the latter’s tendencies to replace the first. By dealing, first, with the romantic spirit, then with the progressive concept of modernity, and, finally, with the denying concepts of post-modernity, we developed the idea that the literary discourse includes the author as a normative and intentional principle to preserve the memory and knowledge, which literature offers to us. The tendency of the author’s denial has resulted in a tendency to deny the tradition, literary canon, and has caused the absurdity of an excess in the necessary methodological apparatus, an excess, which has led to the diminishing of the pleasure of literature and to harming the utilitarian recognition of authors to form the dignity and identity of Western culture. Based on the philosophical principles of cognition, we advocated the idea that canonical literary texts should be recognized through an *a posteriori* criticism, their placing in historical time, and their reflections on our own time, in which they obtain new meanings, while preserving the pertinent meanings of the authors. Their revisiting with the historical, deconstructive, and ironic

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tendencies does not seem to be of literary utility, but only a “retrospective illusion” and the attribution of an aprioristic criticism.

If human categories have remained unchanged thus far, literary knowledge must also respect the permanent sensitivity offered by literary aesthetics, because the same human categories, proven and traditionally tested, carry the same sensitivity over even into our time. The universality of the symbols of canon, tradition, and Western culture must be subject to the philosophical process “save and add” and not “change by destroying.” The philosophical concept “save and add” is protected and cultivated by the author.

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