

On the Canon in Literature

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I. Preliminaries

1.1. Some terminology delimitation

From a logical point of view, the canon seems to have three different meanings, competing or, as the case may be, complementary to each other:

- (1) *firstly*, it is a *classification system*, or a typology/taxonomy.¹ Therefore, the canon represents a species within the genus called classification/typology/taxonomy.² Being a species, we will have to find the predicate (or predicates) that, added to the sufficiency predicates of such a classification system, generate the canon;
- (2) *secondly*, although it is not mandatory (i.e., necessary), the canon usually also expresses a *hierarchy* of canonized “objects”. More precisely, it is not really a hierarchy *per se* but, rather, the establishment of a reference (a benchmark), in relation to which all other “objects” (population individuals, in the logical sense) considered are situated in a subordinate or conditional (possibly dependent) way;
- (3) *thirdly*, the canon expresses an *exemplarity*. In other words, the “objects” accepted in the canon, even if they are not located vertically with respect to the “objects” excluded (as in the case of a usual hierarchy), express the exemplary case or cases, that is, those cases that verify to the highest degree the criterion (or criteria, as the case may be) based on which (to which) the individuals who entered the canon were identified.

The three meanings are not independent but neither are they entirely redundant with each other, so that, in particular canons, constructed and circulated (for example: in the Christian religion, regarding the so-called canonical gospels; in economic theory, regarding the neoclassical homo oeconomicus model; in literature, regarding the so-called lists of canonical authors or canonical works – e.g.: Bloom’s list; in politics, regarding political ideologies – liberalism, conservatism, socialism). The concept closest, from a semantic point of view, to the concept of canon is that of *paradigm*. Established in the philosophy of science by Thomas Kuhn, the concept of paradigm essentially expresses normality,³ and this concept shares the fate of any widely circulated concept – it is progressively demonetized, through marginal uses, obtained through effects of metaphorizing, metonymizing, etc., a “fate” from which the concept of canon is not exempt, of course. Since language, as some believe, is the spoken, living, of the “people”, perhaps it would not be without linguistic interest to inventory these deviations from the norm regarding the use of the term canon, in order to see how far they depart from the (let us say) orthodox concept.

Before making some considerations regarding the substance of the subject brought up for discussion, the title of this intervention must be justified: why canon *in literature* and not *literary canon*? In my “defense” I bring the following argument: literature is a domain, while literary is a qualifier (an adjective) applicable to an object. Any object (an artifact) is literary if it has the property of literariness. The canon, as described (not yet defined) above, cannot be something that has the property of literariness, because it is not an individual artifact, *hic et nunc* (as,

for example, a literary work is), but is a categorial, a general, therefore it seems appropriate to me that the term (concept) of canon be associated with literature as a domain.

1.2. On the literariness

Essentially, literariness is given by the logical conjunction of three predicates, which I call, due to their institutive role, sufficiency predicates:

- (1) *literality*: this predicate requires that the literary object be expressed, in order to acquire the property of perceptibility, in words (Lat. *verbum* – word, *verba* – words).⁴ Of course, the word can be either written or spoken, although many of the theoreticians' opinions wrongly associate literature with written composition. The reference of the name of this predicate is, of course, to the letter, not to the word, but the letter has no significance *per se*, just as it happens, in logic or semiotics, with syncategorematic terms;
- (2) *deviation*: this predicate requires that the language used in the elaboration of the literary object differ (of course, the degree of difference is relative) from common language.⁵ The problem with this predicate is that even jargon (for example, scientific or philosophical) differs from common language, so an important clarification must be made here: the deviation/difference from common language is made through the use of tropes (from the Greek *τρόπος*, which means figure of speech, that is, it refers to the use of language/word in a figurative sense, not in proper sense) not through specific definitions/meanings, as is the case with jargon.⁶ Therefore, this predicate could also be called *troposy*.
- (3) *aesthetic closure*: this predicate requires that the literary object has as its finality, either in the presence of the purpose or in its absence, the aesthetic.⁷ I have referred to the aesthetic, in relatively detail elsewhere, here I will only say that the *eidos* of the aesthetic is symmetry (of any kind and in any way achieved in the literary object), as an explicit expression of the harmony of the substrate.

The conclusion is that a literary object is qualified (qualifiable) as such only if it concomitantly meets the three predicates of sufficiency mentioned above. The absence of any of these predicates rejects the object in question from the quality of a literary object or from belonging to literature. Of course, examining the verification of the predicates is the subject of hermeneutics (*Nota bene*: the predicate of literality is, however, of the nature of evidence⁸), the most difficult to "clarify" being the predicate that refers to aesthetic closure.

Returning to the topic of street language, it is obvious that it does not verify the predicate of deviation from common language, because it is equally obvious that the so-called street language simply means that it is about common language. Irony (*Nota bene*: I referred to irony as postmodernist poetics elsewhere) causes representationality, repudiated as the "flag" of modernism (*nomen odiosa*!) to be copiously brought back onto the scene precisely through the absence of this predicate of deviation – deviation would have reduced or, at the limit, eliminated representationality.

Moreover, the absence of deviation fuels the absence or insignificance of aesthetic closure, the third predicate of literariness. Indeed, the language of the street (i.e., common language) was not created to express tropes, but to describe the environment, from any perspective, in such a way that life proceeds normally (first, by avoiding the risk that affects survival and, second, by facilitating the manifestation of the Heideggerian concern that is incumbent on being or, closer to the original concept, *the being* here and now, that is, *Dasein*).

It can be said that the absence (which cannot, in principle, be eliminated) of the founding theory of postmodernism has led, ironically, as I was saying, to the absence of literary quality in many of the "literary" productions of such prolific authors who can be classified as postmodernists – this fact, which seems indubitable to me, does not, however, seem to create anxiety for those concerned.

II. What is the canon in literature

In my opinion, the canon in literature should retain only its third generic meaning above mentioned: *exemplarity*. Exemplarity does not imply classification or, even much, hierarchy. In other words, the canon represents, rather, a separation (discrimination) in the sense consecrated, in the matter of separation, by Spencer-Brown (in his work *Laws of Form*). This means that the space of literature (inadvertently, here one could say: the literary space) presents itself, from a canonical point of view, as an ocean sprinkled with islands – these islands represent the canons themselves, established (I will return to this aspect of establishment later) by what I will call, below, the “authors” of the canons. These islands of exemplarity, in general, do not communicate with each other, because the criteria on the basis of which they are established/instituted are incommensurable with each other, which makes the canons generated by them to be hermeneutically immiscible among them. A map of the canon in literature would look exactly like this: a set of exemplarities, from distinct perspectives in a crispy manner (“without rest”), incommensurable with each other and, very importantly, non-evolutionary, that is, static. In other words, the canon is a form, in the Aristotelian sense of the word (or, with some precautions, in the sense of the Platonic Idea), manifesting a certain permanence, invariance, allowing the choice of literary works that “verify” the criterion of the canon in question. It is well understood that between the “set” of canons and the set of criteria for their establishment there is a bijective relationship. The idea that, in literature, the canon is “populated” by literary works, not by authors of literary works, immediately emerges. Of course, a literary work enters the canon accompanied by its author, but the author is (as Barthes or Foucault would say) an appendix to the work that we can eventually dispense with (the death of the author). In my opinion, canons cannot be constructed (or, equivalently, they would not be hermeneutically relevant, even if one were to attempt to construct them) so that to include literary authors as canonized “objects.” More analytical literary theorists could, however, construct, within a canon, sub-canons that would have as their criterion of discrimination, this time, the authors, but I believe that such an analyticization does not bring added value to the idea of a canon but, quite probably, complicates the entire canonical construction in a counter-productive way in this case.

III. The conditions of canon’s possibility

First of all, the action of canonization can only be exercised over a critical mass of literary works (we will call, from now on, literary work with the term literary object). The canon is a concept, so it must target the type, that is, it needs a lot of “individuals” (literary objects) from which to abstract a common, typical defining element (or several such common defining elements, as the case may be, but not too many) that verify the pre-established/pre-accepted canonization criterion. Of course, by critical mass of literary objects is not meant a precise value of the number of such literary objects, and the vagueness of the term in question should not be reduced excessively. Whether a time interval is also needed to allow the precipitation of a certain number of literary objects to form that critical mass in a given literary space⁹ is debatable, at least because, as it seems to me, the same critical masses of literary objects involved form, *eo ipso*, exactly the time interval necessary in a case – if we also put a condition of time interval, we would violate Ockham's razor principle.

Secondly, there must be a certain level of development of literary theory, that is, of meta-type reflection on literature. In my opinion, canonization – that is, the action of constituting/institution of the canon – is not an action of the type of literary criticism.¹⁰ In this sense, the following considerations may be useful:

- literary criticism is, always, a reflection on a particular (the literary work or the literary object *hic et nunc*); consequently, the work of literary criticism is an instantiated object, a hypostasis, not a type. Of course, there are works of literary criticism that aspire to the type that seeks a conceptual abstraction from the critical approach. Since this is only possible if literary criticism is exercised on several literary objects, agglutinated according to a criterion that, as a rule, constitutes their common element, it is obvious that we are dealing here with literary... theory;

- the line of demarcation between literary criticism and literary theory is subtle, with "attempts" of transgression on both sides: critical intentions that are finalized theoretically, respectively theoretical intentions that are finalized critically;
- between literary criticism and literary theory there is no relationship as from genus to species or vice versa. I would rather say that literary theory is a category of the Hegelian synthesis type, from where the synthesis achieved on the basis of literary criticism;¹¹
- therefore, given the "individualism" of literary criticism, respectively the "holism" of literary theory, that is, the conjecture suggested above, is reinforced in this context, according to which the canon (respectively canonization) are products of the theoretical literary approach, not of the critical literary approach.

IV. Exemplarity

As said, the crucial aspect of this concept is that the canon is the result of a literary approach of a theoretical, not a critical, nature. I also showed that it is possible (not necessary) for a critical approach that aspires to a certain degree of generality of its own discourse to enter theoretical territory, that is, to transform itself from a (possible) discourse of literary criticism into one of literary theory (*Nota bene*: the probability of a reverse process – of a theoretical intention passing into a critical elaboration – is much lower but not zero). I also showed that the way in which the canon arises in literature is the perception or, as the case may be, the imposition ("invention") of an exemplarity, of some kind or from some perspective.

The issue of exemplarity is crucial in discussing the problem of the canon in literature. Before examining some aspects that lead, through complementarity, to the "elucidation" of the concept of exemplarity, it is useful to firstly try to identify what we call the minimal set of sufficiency predicates capable, from a logical point of view, of leading to the formulation of a definition of the concept of exemplarity (*E*). I consider that the following such sufficiency predicates should be retained:

- (*es*₁) *circumstantiality of the social context* (the social includes also the historical, cultural, etc.) – this means that the substitution of the particular social context in the literary work in question with another social context will not radically affect the ideational framework and aesthetic significance of that work. *Nota bene*: we are in the case of a "testing" of the *counterfactual* type. This counterfactuality is of the type of testing by falsifiability, used in scientific knowledge: a negative result of the testing eliminates the literary work in question from the "set" of exemplarities, while a positive result maintains it, *provisionally*, in that "set". This statement leads to the following important conclusion: exemplarity is never definitively established, at any time, in the future, or under the examination of another literary theorist, the exemplarity can be rejected, which means that the positive result of the counterfactual examination has only the value of a corroboration, not of a certification; on the other hand, the negative result is definitive and irrevocable, functioning as a counterexample which, as is known, represents an *experimentum crucis*;
- (*es*₂) *invariance related to the plot mark* – this means that the plot (story, narrative) can be replaced by any other, so that the latter remains capable of supporting the original ideational framework and aesthetic significance of the work in question, without any essential modifications to them. *Nota bene*: this is also a *counterfactual* examination. As in the case of the previous sufficiency predicate, it is about the same consequence: a positive result will bring a corroboration of the exemplarity, while a negative result will bring a rejection of the exemplarity;¹²
- (*es*₃) *poietic uniformity* – this means that the prosody (writing, poietics) of the literary work in question can be described (presented) rationally, logically, completely, believably (i.e., discursively), and its imprint, as it was described, is immersed and retrievable in the work as a whole, representing a mark of it. *Nota bene*: this examination is *factual*. Since it is not a test of the nature of falsification, we have, simply, a test of the type of verification.¹³

I specify a particularly important aspect: poietic uniformity does not mean poietic homogeneity. The poetics of a literary work can be heterogeneous, but this heterogeneity must be distributed... uniformly in that work, precisely in order to represent, as I said above, a distinctive sign (mark) of that work. For example, many so-called postmodernist literary works use the mixture of ontologies in the poietics used – if such a mixture of ontologies is immersed uniformly in the work, the predicate of sufficiency in question is validated. Or, another procedure specific to postmodernism: *mise en abyme* – it constitutes a mark of the work only if its presence is distributed relatively uniformly in the economy of that work, not just accidentally, sporadically. Therefore, one can write, from a formal point of view:

$$E \leftarrow (es_1) \wedge (es_2) \wedge (es_3)$$

Comments

- (1) In no case should it be understood from the above that the testing of the exemplarity of a literary work has any connection with or gives any indication of the literary value of that work (we will address the issue of literary value later). Aesthetic achievement, if it exists, can be "hosted" by an exemplary literary work as well as by a non-exemplary literary work.
- (2) A literary work can be exemplary in only one way, namely by simultaneously verifying the sufficiency predicates mentioned above. Instead, it can be non-exemplary in seven distinct ways, according to whether it violates one or more of the sufficiency predicates.

No.	The sufficiency predicate/s violated	The type of non-exemplarity
1.	(es_1)	framework-based non-exemplarity
2.	(es_2)	story-based non-exemplarity;
3.	(es_3)	poietical-based non-exemplarity
4.	$(es_1) \wedge (es_2)$	background-based non-exemplarity
5.	$(es_1) \wedge (es_3)$	formally-based non-exemplarity;
6.	$(es_2) \wedge (es_3)$	narratively-based non-exemplarity
7.	$(es_1) \wedge (es_2) \wedge (es_3)$	structurally-based non-exemplarity

- (3) One might ask whether poietics is equivalent to style or whether style should also constitute one of the sufficiency predicates of the concept of exemplarity of literary work. My opinion is as follows:
 - (3.1) regarding the question of the relationship between poietics and style: obviously, poietics is objectified, in the literary work, by means of the style of the author of that work. Style is, therefore, a property of poietics but, essentially, it characterizes the author and the way in which the author carries out the act of writing the work¹⁴ (that is, carries out poietics). In principle, the same poietics (*Nota bene*: how the aesthetic commensurability of two different poietics can be achieved is a distinct problem, ignored here, for now¹⁵) can be objectified in different styles, which are strongly idiosyncratic – let us remember Buffon's aphorism, uttered on the occasion of his reception speech at the French Academy, in 1753: "le style c'est l'homme même";
 - (3.2) regarding the consideration of style in the "decision" to establish exemplarity: we have shown, several times, previously, that exemplarity (and, for that matter, the canon) in literature concerns the individual literary work and not the author of that work. Although both style and the poietics of the elaboration of a literary work originate in the author, poietics has a much larger and more relevant "community" component than style. Thus, we can encounter the same poietics but realized/objectified in a different way (style). Consequently, the "chance" that the poietics of a literary work can be found in several such individual literary objects is much greater than the chance of encountering the same style, associated either with the same poietics or with different ones – the chance increases, however, in the case of imitations;

(3.3) in fact, the relationship between poietics and style is more complicated and subtler – we briefly mention some of these aspects:

- although there is a logical priority of poietics over style, there is, at the same time, a chronological priority of style over poietics: the author “comes” to the literary work with style, and poietics is a result of the objectification of style;
- style is rather intuitive, non-cerebral (as a rule, the author has a style, s/he does not propose himself/herself to have one) while poietics is rather deliberative (as a rule, the author constructs his/her poietics as a result of an intellectual project);
- there may be a causal relationship, particularly subtle, from style to poietics, in the sense that a given style is not compatible with any poietics, the former playing a filtering or selection role in relation to the latter.

Once established "ontologically" (*Nota bene*: it is an ontology of the type of Popper's third world, that is, in the sense of objectifying inter-subjectivities, because we are dealing with an intellectual artifact "voted" by the niche community on the "territory" of literature), exemplarity generates a minimal set of new necessity predicates – we say this because, from a logical point of view, any sufficiency predicate is also a necessity predicate, but the reverse is false: there are necessity predicates that are not also sufficiency predicates – we call, therefore, the latter *new* necessity predicates, the sufficiency predicates constituting the... *old* necessity predicates. We believe that the following new necessity predicates should be considered in examining the concept of exemplarity in literature¹⁶ (these predicates have the nature of obligatory effects, as required by the qualifier “of necessity”):

- (en_1) *hub effect*:¹⁷ exemplarity constitutes a “point” at which the space of literature (by simplifying the expression: the literary space) “curves”, in the sense that an exemplarity, once established (identified, recognized, accepted, made aware of) and publicized – that is, made publicly known – becomes a center of attraction both for literary creation (new authors will want to construct their literary works in such a way that they verify the three criteria of sufficiency predicates), and for literary theory (new literary theorists will be attracted to taking the exemplarity in question into account, possibly to extract/construct a canon. In a way, an exemplarity generates a positive feedback, that is, a self-escalating feedback, or a self-catalyst one, that will lead, over time, to the growth of the “population” of literary works that verify that exemplarity. From a logical point of view, there is an increase in the share of the exemplarity in question in the total number of literary works that are born – which is analogous to a population-type evolutionary process, in which a certain mutation (in our case, the birth of an exemplarity) extends to an increasingly large number of “individuals”, where the individuals are the literary works themselves in that literary field.¹⁸ *Nota bene*: according to the way in which its functioning was described, this new necessity predicate can also be called the *canonical gravity effect*; the hub effect (or *canonical gravity*) is a *quantitative* effect which, however, through the well-known Hegelian phenomenon, can lead to qualitative leaps;
- (en_2) *fitness effect*: exemplarity will always constitute, however vaguely, a benchmark for writing, which will contribute, on average and in the relatively long term, to a reduction in random diversity of singular or minority poietics and, therefore, to a stabilization and strengthening of poietics with a higher degree of "recognition" within the literary community; the fitness effect is a *qualitative* effect;
- (en_3) *selection effect*: this effect of exemplarity is a logical consequence of the first two new necessity predicates above. It is, on the one hand, a process of self-selection of poietics who exhibit exemplarity or a certain exemplarity (this process is an endogenous one, carried out by the authors themselves), and, on the other hand, a selection process carried out by literary theorists through the consecration of canons in literature (this process is an exogenous one); the selection effect is a *structural* effect.

Therefore, from a formal point of view, regarding the new necessity predicates, we can write:

$$E \rightarrow (en_1) \wedge (en_2) \wedge (en_3)$$

so, the concept of exemplarity is defined, in its complete phenomenology, by the logical formula: $\bigwedge_{i=1}^3 (es_i) \rightarrow$

$$E \rightarrow \bigwedge_{j=1}^3 (en_j)$$

V. Emergence of the canon in literature

In my opinion, exemplarity is a *conditio sine qua non* for an individual literary object to be considered canonizable. However, exemplarity does not exhaust the conditionality of that literary object to be eligible from the perspective of a certain canon. In other words, exemplarity only brings canonical eligibility, but not canonical assignment. I mean that exemplarity constitutes a special conditionality (i.e., related to the species), requiring, in order to complete the canonical assignment of a given literary object, also an individual conditionality (i.e., related to the individual, in our case the individual being the literary object in question, i.e., the literary work concerned). Only the logical conjunction of special and individual conditionalities makes the literary work in question be assigned, “legally”, to a certain canon. In what follows, I will discuss the following two topics of interest in the margin of the concept of canon in literature: (a) the authors of the canon; (b) the criteria for generating the canon.

1.3. Authors of the canon

In relation to the issue of the author(s) of the canon in literature, we actually have two sub-issues to clarify, which I would call: (i) the categorial authors of the canon; (ii) the factual authors of the canon.

1.3.1. Categorial authors

The concept of categorial authors of the canon refers to literary theorists who analyze and “decide” on the existence, emergence, and constitution of the canon. I therefore believe that the probability of literary theorists entering the “set” of categorial authors of the canon is much higher than the probability of literary critics entering that “set” – *Nota bene*: of course, the probability ratio between the two categories of canon’s authors is reversed in the case of the “set” of factual canon authors (as we will see below). Perhaps some readers will consider the so crispy distinction made between literary theorists and literary critics to be rigid, dogmatic, or unproductive, but I believe that the background required of each of the two categories is so different that maintaining such a distinction of roles regarding the phenomenology of the canon is justified. However, the distinction in question is not absolute, although it remains fragile, it consists in the fact that a literary critic must know the literary theory of literary criticism, although s/he is not “obliged” to know literary theory in its entirety (this condition would greatly reduce and with positive results the irrational production of impressionist reviews – which do not constitute genuine literary criticism – elaborated and accepted by specialized publications). Once established, the literary canon has a great stability (inertia) over time, because its replacement requires considerable theoretical and hermeneutic work – the more substantiated it is, the greater, of course, its inertia. However, since exemplarity, if correctly determined, has general (with more “luck”, universal) valences, the lifespan of a canon in literature is extremely long (*Nota bene*: in Western literature it is considered that this duration extends from Dante to the present day, that is, over a period of 700 years).

1.3.2. Factual authors

The factual authors of the canon are aimed at literary theorists but, above all, as I said, at literary critics, who analyze and “decide” on the assignment of a certain literary object to a certain given canon. Therefore, the factual authors do not construct the canon (which is the “task” of the categorial authors) but establish the relationships of belonging, filiation, etc. between a concrete-historical literary object (i.e., hypostatized, as such, as objectification) and the canon. Of course, this is not a mechanical action, since there may be several contemporary canons, competing with each other.¹⁹ If there is a single canon or, equivalently, if it is recognized/accepted, within the relevant literary community (RLC),²⁰ a single canon, then the mission of the factual authors of the canon is limited to examining the conditions of assignment/association of the individual/particular literary object to the integrative requirements of the canon in question. If, however, several canons operate simultaneously, recognized/accepted

as such by the relevant literary community, then the analysis that factual authors must undertake is more complicated. *First*, they must establish the canonizable parameters of the particular literary object in question. *Second*, they must verify the degree to which these canonizable parameters verify the sufficiency predicates of each of the canons in “competition” for the adjudication of that literary object. *Third*, the decision to assign the literary object to one of the canons must be made. Establishing the canonizable parameters of the literary object obviously refers primarily to establishing the exemplarity (or non-exemplarity, as the case may be) of that literary object. Exemplarity is not an absolute property, but a relative one to the canon, so it will be established, if this is the case in a given literary context, in relation to each of the canons accepted/recognized by the RLC.

Therefore, the factual authors of the canon are, in fact, those who verify the sufficiency conditions established by the categorial authors and “decide” on the inclusion (or not) of the examined literary work in the canon concerned. The question arises, of course: how exactly is the aforementioned “decision” made? The procedure is similar to the one that operates in the scientific field regarding the paradigm²¹ – through an inter-subjective “vote” of the factual authors, firstly and, of course, of the authors in the field of literature, secondly. Somehow, over time and, somehow, statistically, an agreement is formed at the level of the literary community in a certain literary space (usually national) regarding both the canon and the membership or affiliation of literary works to that canon.

While, as I mentioned above, a canon, once established at the categorial level, is almost indestructible, instead the membership/affiliation of a literary work to the canon is much more susceptible to challenge – new factual authors of the canon can challenge previous methods of analysis regarding canon inclusion and can remove some already adjudicated works from the canon, as they can introduce other previously rejected works into the respective canon. Such revisions can be determined by many causes: poetic fashions (such as current postmodernism²²), ideological idiosyncrasies (as is the case with the scandalous concept of east-ethics), animosities vs. affinities between factual authors of the canon and authors of literary works, etc.

1.4. Criteria of generating the canon

A systematic approach, from a conceptual-logical perspective, to the canon in literature is difficult to find (to use a substitute for the phrase “unfindable”) in theoretical production. Even the much-quoted Harold Bloom²³ proceeds rather intuitively (not to say speculatively) relying on his fascinating terminological and phenomenological creativity.

1.4.1. Non-criteria/Anti-criteria

I will say, from the beginning, that a criterion regarding the generation of the canon must be able to function/act at a generalized level – for example, strangeness or originality (both claimed by the aforementioned Bloom) are not found, of a general nature, in literary productions. Likewise, the influence (more precisely the “anxiety of influence”, with a phrase by the same author) of a literary work(s) on new literary productions is, as a rule, regional (both under genre, and under space, and under time).²⁴ Apophatically, I will argue that the following (possible) five criteria for the emergence or deliberate construction of a canon are inadmissible:

- *aesthetic value* – however we define, perceive, describe or “measure” the aesthetic value of a literary object, it does not verify, *eo ipso*, the condition of exemplarity. This does not mean, of course, that a literary work that is valuable from an aesthetic perspective cannot also be exemplary, at the same time. What I mean to say is that I believe that the property of canonicity (so to speak) does not imply, in the causal sense of the expression, therefore necessarily, the property of aesthetic value, and, of course, the reverse is not true either. Therefore, a work that, from an aesthetic point of view, is a notorious achievement (has aesthetic exemplarity), does not necessarily have canonical exemplarity. Here a problem arises: why, nevertheless, does the aesthetic not imply or cover the canonical? I will make a few clarifications in the margin of this question:

- *firstly*, it is not a question of excluding the canonical aesthetic (I have already specified that the aesthetic and the canonical are not incompatible), but of the fact that the aesthetic, *per se*, does not presume the canonical;
- *secondly*, the aesthetic can enter the canonical only “accompanied” by exemplarity – of course, it is possible for a literary work to be, simultaneously, exemplary and to hold aesthetic value;
- *thirdly*, a fundamental aspect of this problem is that the aesthetic is not predicated by the sufficiency of the canonical. But the opposite conclusion is not valid either: the canonical is not a necessary predicate of the aesthetic, in the sense that a canonical literary work does not have, *eo ipso*, aesthetic value – the canonical does not institute the aesthetic, but only recognizes it;
- *fourthly*, the aesthetic is autonomous in relation to the canonical – as I have said on several occasions (and in several communications) there can be literary works of great aesthetic value but which are not canonical (first of all, not exemplary);
- *fifthly*, a legitimate sub-question arises here: is it admissible for a literary work with a low aesthetic value (at the limit, without aesthetic value) but which is exemplary to belong to the canon? My comment is as follows:
 - in principle, there is no concept of null aesthetic value in relation to a literary work, since even the simple nominal verification of the three conditions of literariness ensures, *ab ovo*, a certain degree/level of the aesthetic property (for example, the presence of tropes). This means that eliminating the criterion of the aesthetic from the sufficiency predicates of canonicity (or of the canonizable), as I propose, does not risk selecting works devoid of aesthetic value in the canon;
 - of course, at the same time, canonization does not select the greatest aesthetic values, many of which (including, say, the greatest aesthetic value one), may be considered inadmissible in the canon, and therefore may remain outside it.
- *quantitative dominance* – either of an author, or of a trend/fashion that aggregates several authors, the quantitative dominance cannot, either, constitute a criterion of canonicity. Proceeding by reduction to the absurd, we only have to make a program for writing literary works for artificial intelligence and, in a short time, we would have any canon we want. From a historical point of view, even the most prolific authors have not managed to impose canons, while other authors have established national canons with only a few poems;²⁵
- *qualitative influence* – whether as a choice of subject, or as a choice of vision, or as a choice of writing (poietics), etc., the qualitative influence cannot be considered a criterion for the emergence/construction of the canon.²⁶ Returning to Bloom, it seems that he considers canonical phenomenology as a kind of chain of influences in time (less so in space, given the cultural, primarily linguistic, assignment of any canon which, for this reason, usually remains, at most, national), so that, once a canon has been established (usually national) it is maintained through this chain of influences, unable to but consolidate, of course, until an excess of originality or strangeness, etc., establishes another canon that repeats the mechanism of the chain of influences.²⁷

Nota bene I: is there a proportional link between exemplarity (a crucial condition for canonicity) and aesthetic value? For example, can we say that a literary work is all the more aesthetically valuable the more exemplary it is? My answer, consistent with the above reflections, is negative: there is no necessary influence (in the logical sense, here) of exemplarity on the aesthetic, nor a necessary one of the aesthetic on exemplarity. However, contingently, such influences can be encountered. For example, the canonical gravity effect can motivate some authors to make great efforts to associate the exemplarity generated by this effect with a high aesthetic value (all, as I generally maintain, in a cerebral, programmatic way).

Nota bene 2: it is clear that there are degrees of aestheticism with respect to a generic literary work, but are there also degrees of exemplarity of the literary work? I have the following opinion on this matter:

- (i) there cannot be degrees of exemplarity – if we were to accept such a possibility, it would mean that we could establish inter-canonical hierarchies (see my statements on the problem of inter-canonical commensurability – being a paradigmatic model, the canon has a nominal exemplarity, i.e., chosen at discretion by categorial authors);
- (ii) within the same exemplarity there are, however, aesthetic hierarchies (more precisely, hierarchies of the aesthetic value of canonized literary works). While the “task” of establishing the canon falls to the categorial authors, the “task” of establishing membership in the established canon, as well as that of establishing the aesthetic value of the literary work, and therefore implicitly, of the aesthetic hierarchy within the canon, falls to the factual authors.
- *originality* (which also includes Bloomian strangeness) – either of the subject, or of the poietics, or from any other perspective²⁸ that could be highlighted. Of course, novelty, in whatever way it manifests itself, confers aesthetic value (not too easy to prove, in fact, considering that by aesthetic should, I believe, be understood harmonious, especially at a formal, perceptual level), but the aesthetic has already been excluded from the list of canonizing criteria of a literary work.
- *singularity* – although literary history brings several notorious cases of singular works that have instituted or constituted (very) strong impulses towards the establishment of a canon, the singularity of the literary work cannot be considered, *per se*, institutive of a canon, first of all considering that the very predicate of singularity is (or seems to be) contradictory to exemplarity – exemplarity has the connotation of a general/universal. However, historical, therefore contingent, cases can make some singular literary works institute or lead to the canon.

1.4.2. Criteria

Then, what are the criteria that (for categorial authors) underlie the emergence, construction or establishment of the canon in literature? My opinion on this matter is that there are two crucial criteria, of the nature of sufficiency, that is, as a *conditio sine qua non*, which, once highlighted in an irrefutable way, place the respective literary work in the body of the canon:

- (*E*) *exemplarity*: as I have already shown, exemplarity constitutes the primary criterion of canonicity, respectively of the canonization of a literary object (of a literary work). The reader may find it strange that, while the aesthetic value or originality of a literary work are non-criteria, exemplarity (which can also be associated with a low level of aesthetic value) is a criterion, even a primary criterion. But it should not be forgotten that exemplarity aims at an unalterable property of the literary work (see the three tests regarding exemplarity: es_1 , es_2 , es_3) in space, in time, as ideational, and as poietical. This durability is an indubitable sign regarding the organicity of the literary work in question – *Nota bene*: it is possible, of course, that the exemplary literary work actually generates this organicity and does not feed on it, in this case having to do with writers of the greatest literary (artistic, more generally) force, as, for example, Dante or Shakespeare are considered;
- (*P*) *pedagogism*: by pedagogy I understand a pedagogical function of literary art. Such a function is rejected by the majority of literary theorists on aesthetics (even if they are not necessarily aesthetically fundamentalists) but this rejection seems to me to be based on a confusion between the pedagogical function and the ideological function. The pedagogical function, in fact, manifests itself at a subtle, hermeneutic, not declarative/discursive, level. Here it must be said that the aesthetic impact itself, which cannot be absent, as I have shown previously, from the canonical work, has a pedagogical function in the most general and... subtle sense of this notion.²⁹ Those who proclaim the uniqueness of the aesthetic criterion for canonicity extrapolate the property of aesthetic from the concept of aesthetic value to that

of canonical value. The two values are, of course, not miscible but they are not contradictory either, simply each one aims at different referentials, and these referentials are not substitutable (at least, not entirely) between them. I would also like to respond to a (predictable) objection that, through this predicate of sufficiency of canonisability, I introduce an ethical component of the canonical literary work. First of all, I do not see why the ethical function and the aesthetic function would be contradictory.³⁰ Second, the ethical is only a (possibly, inalienable, however) part of pedagogy, the latter having to be interpreted as that property of the literary work that cannot but leave traces in the receiver.³¹ Perhaps, with a rather, however, barbaric term, we could re-name pedagogy, for more sensitive ears, as *exo-imprinting* – that is, the property of leaving traces/imprints outside the literary work itself, more precisely, on the receiver.³² But, can there be literary works that are devoid of pedagogy (i.e., *exo-imprinting*)? In principle, yes – I will not develop this direction of discussion here, although it is not without theoretical interest, but I believe that each of us has encountered such mimicry of literary writings. I would add that non-exemplarity can be a good predictor of non-pedagogism, although non-pedagogism, *per se*, may not indicate non-exemplarity. Perhaps it is not without interest to recall that literature has had a pedagogical vocation since immemorial times, and the great writers (e.g., those belonging to the so-called Western canon – see Harold Bloom), if they transmitted from generation to generation their positioning in literary art, it was less about aesthetics, and much more about exemplarity and pedagogy – perhaps only from these two perspectives (i.e., from the canonical perspective, as the canon is defined in this communication), can we speak of influence in the history of literature.

If, regarding exemplarity, it is quite obvious that it represents a property of the literary work that must be identified (and proven, through the mentioned tests) by categorial authors, in relation to pedagogy the question arises: is it possible for a literary work to not have a pedagogical function, that is, a function (of any nature or form or level/intensity) of learning oriented, as a finality, towards the receiver? The answer is negative, based on the fact that a literary text has literariness, that is, aesthetic closure, therefore, at least one pedagogical (learning) function it possesses by definition: the aesthetic function.³³ However, like exemplarity, pedagogy must be identified and proven as such.

Therefore, the categorial authors of the canon (*Nota bene*: I do not agree with Bloom's assertion – risky, like many others in the aforementioned work – that a canon is self-institutional or that there are singular works that come joint with a canon in literature) must project the canon as an artifact external to the literary work (and, *a fortiori*, to the author of a literary work) although starting, obviously, from the literary work.

After considering the two fundamental criteria for the eligibility of a literary work in the canon, which I will call sufficiency predicates, I believe that two fundamental criteria for the functioning of a literary work within the canon can also be established, which I will call necessity predicates.³⁴ These necessity predicates are the following: (a) canonical gravity; (b) the induction of aesthetic originality.

(a) canonical gravity

Canonical gravity, which we have also discussed elsewhere, is an effect, on the one hand, of imitation of a consecrated model (an effect from which even the greatest writers are not immune, as is well known) and, on the other hand, of framing literary production within a framework of "respectability", since this production has the face of the canon. In the long term and statistically, the probability of strengthening the canon in question increases. This effect has a preponderantly quantitative nature and functions (by virtue of its name) as a hub (i.e., as a self-catalysis or, as said in scientific jargon, as a positive/self-escalating feedback).

(b) induction of aesthetic originality

Here, somehow, we reverse Bloom's logic:³⁵ the aesthetic is not a criterion for eligibility in the canon, instead, it is a first-order effect (along with canonical gravity) of canonicity. By inducing aesthetic originality, I understand the impulse given to writers to differentiate themselves, within the canon, through the aesthetic level or, better said, through aesthetic novelty. This effect is of a qualitative nature and aims at heterogeneity, while canonical

gravity aims at homogeneity. This predicate of necessity is particularly important for analyzing the impact of canonicity in a literary space – one can say that it has an anti-entropic (literary) effect, because it opposes the process of homogenization, generated by exemplarity, creating diversity/heterogeneity within exemplarity precisely through aesthetics. Therefore, once a canon is established, it will generate, *eo ipso*, the two processes that enter into a perpetual “arms race”: homogenization vs. heterogenization of literary production. Here, therefore, we find, in the proposal we make here, what literary theory has always supported: the stimulating role of the canon in literary creation.

1.4.3. Commensurability

We discussed above the way of examining exemplarity (the primordial criterion – that is, both decisive and primitive in logical and chronological order). However, a problem arises here, related to the way in which exemplarity is examined in relation to the canon generated by the above criteria, namely the commensurability of the canons among themselves.

I believe that a canon functions, in literature, in an analogous way to that in which a paradigm functions in science or politics. This means that, in principle, there is no commensurability³⁶ of canons, neither among contemporary ones (simultaneous, if several such canons function), nor among non-contemporary ones (successive, even if not in line of descent). The explanation is easy to understand: exemplarity refers to a set of fundamental attributes, which give the personality and “brand” of a canon – if those are taken over by another canon, we are not dealing with a different canon (*Nota bene*: the degree does not matter for exemplarity, but only the nominality of the attributes in question), and if another canon considers other attributes, then, obviously, from the incommensurability of the attributes, the incommensurability of the canons generated by the respective sets of attributes necessarily results. The incommensurability of the canons generates the prohibition of their value qualification, one in relation to the other – no canon is “pre-signaled” by anything before being established by the categorial authors of the canon in question, therefore the contingent character and the socio-historical brand are inherent in the emergence of the canon in literature. Equally, no canon is “superior” to another (from what point of view could this “superiority” be considered?).

VI. Impact of the canon in literature

1.5. Preamble

At this point in the discussion, it seems relevant to me to discuss the subject of the possibility of a typology of the canon in literature. In this sense, I will begin with a brief examination of the criteria for establishing, respectively, the classes of constituting the canon in literature. Of course, as previously, the discussion will be general (abstract) so that the interested readers or researchers can particularize the results of the examination presented for concrete, historical/empirical cases.

Before proceeding to develop the discussion about the (possible) classes of the “literary canon”, I find it useful to have a brief discussion in the margin of a conclusion already I before, namely about the fact that the genesis of the canon is an effect of theoretical reflection, that is, it belongs to the field of literary theory, and not of critical reflection, which would belong to the field of literary criticism.

My main argument is based on the principle that any phenomenon requires a theory for its intelligibility. The theory lays the logical foundations (*Nota bene*: there are no more primitive, i.e., more fundamental, bases than logical bases for any theory or explanatory model – all other constructions on the margin of the theory in question are, more or less, inferences, i.e., deductions from these logical bases) of the general phenomenology in question. If the claim that the maturity of a theory/science is given by the amount of mathematics it contains (a fundamentalist positivism, or a positivist fundamentalism, I would say) is clearly utopian and, with high probability, unproductive, on the other hand, the claim that any theory should first elaborate its own logic, i.e., its own canvas of principles, seems to me not only reasonable, but obligatory from an epistemological perspective. It is obvious, based on the above, that the field of literary criticism represents an application of literary theory to

the literary object (literary work). Since the canon in literature is, somehow, a fundamental standard of literary creation, the idea, which I have supported throughout this essay, that the problem of the canon is a theoretical problem, that is, a problem of literary theory, seems quite sustainable.

1.6. Role and functions of the canon

I believe that the role of the canon is to produce (“secrete”) the *canonical gravity*. As I have suggested previously, canonical gravity can be considered, forcing a harmless scientism, a field³⁷ of agglutination of the exemplarity of literary production/creation. Once the canon is recognized or, in most cases, tacitly accepted, literary creators tend to fall into its wake – for various reasons, the most notable being, of course, that of the recognition, by the literary community, of their own work as canonical. Obviously, this role is beneficial for the entire literary creation because, by attempting to be canonical, the literary work will verify, at least to a reasonable level (depending on the talent and creative skills of the author(s) in question) the two predicates of sufficiency of the canon: exemplarity and pedagogism, respectively.

From a logical point of view, a role is objectified by functions, being a synergistic effect of those functions. We therefore have to discuss the set of functions that the canon performs, in a generic sense, in literary phenomenology, respectively in the literary field.

1.6.1. The criteria to identify/establish the canon’s functions

Of course, the first step in identifying the (generic) functions of a (generic) canon is to establish the criteria that these functions must meet in order to be eligible as such. I propose the following criteria³⁸ for this purpose (the “four C” rule), which must, of course, be verified simultaneously by each of the functions:

- (i) (C1) *convergence* (synergy) towards the realization of the role of the canon: any of the functions must have as its impact the objectification of canonical gravity;
- (ii) (C2) *consistency* (non-contradictoriness) between them: taken two by two, the functions must not cancel each other out in the objectification of the role of the canon;
- (iii) (C3) *coherence* (independence, non-redundancy) between them: the functions, taken two by two, must not be derivable from each other, so they must not overlap one another from the perspective of content (action);
- (iv) (C4) *completeness* (sufficiency): functions must have the ability, without the need for additional functions, to objectify/realize the role of the canon, i.e., canonical gravitation.

1.6.2. The functions of the canon

Based on the above-mentioned criteria, I consider that the functions of the canon in literature are (or should be) the following:

- (1) (α) *signaling function*: refers to the fact that the existence of the canon³⁹ transmits information about its own concept of exemplarity, respectively pedagogicity (the two predicates of cumulative sufficiency of the generic canon) in the entire literary field⁴⁰ associated with that canon – for example, in the entire national literary field;
- (2) (β) *coagulation function*: refers to a (plausible, although uncertain) process of agglutination of literary creation within the margin of significance of the canon, based on the (natural) desire of literary creators to be accepted as canonical authors (*Nota bene*: of course, as I have specified several times previously, literary works are those that are or are not considered canonical, authors being considered as such only through a somewhat forced extension of canonical membership; I recall that Mr. Harold Bloom considers precisely authors to be or to be not canonical⁴¹);
- (3) (γ) *validation function*: refers to what we could call a public vote (of course, not a universal vote, nor one with equal weight, but one restricted to the literary community and weighted by the “literary

weight” of the issuer of the respective vote, which includes three categories of actors: literary theorists, literary critics and – in fact, those who “support” the first two categories – literary authors or, more precisely, authors of literature/literary works) – Nota bene: namely, the relevant literary community (RLC). Therefore, this function of the canon ensures a kind of “certification” of literary works from a canonical perspective (not from an aesthetic perspective, as I explained in detail previously). Canonical validation is not a value validation, it says nothing about literary value,⁴² but is a canonical validation, i.e., of belonging (or non-belonging) to the canon;

- (4) (δ) *self-catalysis function*: refers to a self-preservation property of the canon, in the sense that, through the three previous functions, the canon establishes itself and, in fortunate cases, proves itself as a *sui generis* instance of orientation/guidance of literary creation. The more "authoritarian" the canon is in imposing its three previous functions, the more likely and effective it will be to self-replicate, because its ordering prestige will increase. This is what is called, in systems theory, a process endowed with positive feedback (self-escalating). A canon, as soon as it starts to function, will constantly work for its own... permanence as an evaluative and directing instance in the literary field in question.

1.6.3. Logical evaluation of the canon's functions

For the logical evaluation of the functions of the canon, I will examine whether the identified functions simultaneously verify the condition of the “four Cs”.

- verification of condition C1:
 - regarding the *signaling function* (α): signaling, in the literary field, the conditions of exemplarity, respectively pedagogicity of the canon is convergent with the implementation of canonical gravity;
 - regarding the *coagulation function* (β): the coagulation of literary creation in the margin of the canon represents the very result (*expressis verbis*) expected for the realization of the role of the canon, namely: the exercise of canonical gravity;
 - regarding the *validation function* (γ): through this function, the canon “rewards” the effort (of the authors) of literary works to verify the exemplarity, respectively pedagogicity of that canon, therefore the function is convergent with the realization of the role of the canon;
 - regarding the *self-catalysis function* (δ): the self-catalysis (self-replication) of the canon is, obviously, meant to ensure the very replication of the role of the canon (the exercise of canonical gravity).

We can conclude that the set of the four functions of the canon act convergently in the direction of objectifying the role of the canon.

- verification of condition C2 (obviously, we have six cases – C_4^2):
 - (α) and (β) are consistent with each other: signaling cannot compromise coagulation (in fact, it stimulates it); symmetrically, coagulation constitutes, *eo ipso, sui generis* signaling for other creators of literature/literary works;
 - (α) and (γ) are consistent with each other: signaling is not contradictory to validation, in fact, signaling creates exactly the attitude of the author of the literary work so that the work in question verifies the two predicates of sufficiency of the canon; symmetrically, coagulation only amplifies signaling, both for the author of the canonized work and for other literary creators;

- (α) and (δ) are consistent with each other: signaling is not contradictory to self-catalysis, although the causal link between them is not very strong;
- (β) and (γ) are consistent with each other: coagulation is a condition for the production of validation (*Nota bene*: not really a condition, in the causal/conditional sense, but rather a preparatory step); symmetrically, validation contributes to increasing the credibility of coagulation for obtaining validation;
- (β) and (δ) are consistent with each other: coagulation is, in fact, the “raw material” for the self-catalysis (self-replication) of the canon; symmetrically, the self-replication of the canon maintains the “pressure” of canonical gravity for coagulation;
- (γ) and (δ) are consistent with each other: validation strengthens the capacity and propensity of the canon to self-replicate, because validating a work as canonical generates the belief that the canon works; symmetrically, self-catalysis maintains the canon in a state of performing new validations.

We can conclude that the set of four functions of the canon are consistent (non-contradictory) with each other, taken two by two.

- verification of condition C3:

- (α) cannot be inferred from (β) nor vice versa: signaling is not inferentially deducible from coagulation, because coagulation can also occur without the contribution of signaling: simply, an author creates a literary work that, by accident, verifies the predicates of the canon; symmetrically, coagulation is not inferentially deducible from signaling, because, despite signaling, an author will refuse (or be incapable, as the case may be) to comply with signaling;
- (α) cannot be inferred from (γ) nor vice versa: signaling is not inferentially deducible from validation, because validation could occur in the absence of signaling, through the mere accidental superposition of the literary work over the canon's sufficiency conditionalities; symmetrically, validation cannot be logically derived from signaling, because signaling may not end with a literary work that verifies the canon's predicates;
- (α) cannot be inferred from (δ) nor vice versa: signaling cannot be inferred from self-catalysis, because self-catalysis can occur without signaling indicating to the creators of literary works what the canon's predicates are; symmetrically, self-catalysis cannot be inferred from signaling, because it can occur without signaling attracting literary works into the framework of the canon, the latter being able to verify, by chance, the predicates of that canon;
- (β) cannot be inferred from (γ) nor vice versa: coagulation cannot be inferred from validation, because validation can also be done for a literary work that did not aim to verify the predicates of the canon but, by chance, verified them; symmetrically, validation cannot be inferred from coagulation, because an author (more precisely the literary work of an author) can try to verify the predicates of the canon, thus entering the “population” of canonical literary works, but that work may not be, in the end, validated as canonical;
- (β) cannot be inferred from (δ) nor vice versa: validation cannot be inferred from self-catalysis, because self-catalysis occurs at the level of the ensemble of canonical works, and not with respect to each individual literary work; symmetrically, self-catalysis is not inferable from validation, although the quantitative aspect of a certain relationship between the two functions cannot be denied.

We can conclude that the ensemble of the four functions of the canon are independent (non-redundant) among themselves, taken two by two.

- verification of condition C4:

Verifying this condition regarding the functions of the canon is difficult. Furthermore, I consider that it does not constitute a theoretical (logical) problem, as was the case with the other three conditions, but a practical/empirical problem.

I consider that the four functions identified above have the potential to completely cover the causalities that lead to the realization of the role of the canon, but, as I said, only the actual exercise of the canon in question can “say” whether or not the functions in question constitute a complete system of functions.

1.7. Adverse/perverse effects of the canon

By adverse effect of a process/mechanism/procedure is meant an actual result which, although it can be anticipated, possibly predicted, has a meaning that expresses a deviation from the expected, "orthodox" result. I will briefly develop the two aspects that are both defining and problematic for the concept of adverse effect: (i) deviation from expectation; (ii) preeminence of meaning in the evaluation/qualification of the effect as adverse.

(i) Deviation

The deviation from the expected (including, possibly, predicted) result refers to the deviation of the actual impact of the functions of the canon⁴³ from the “programmed” impact of the respective functions. For example, the signaling function could induce in future authors of literary works the propensity to proceed in such a way as not to write something canonical, so as not to regiment themselves into a rigid paradigmatic current of literary creation. The same deviant impact is also possible to appear in connection with the coagulation function, for the same reasons presented for the signaling function. For the sake of discussion, I will say that, if an adverse effect, as it has just been described, involves a maximum deviation from the expected result (*Nota bene*: the maximum deviation obviously means the inverted effect, i.e., the opposite in terms of meaning – see point (ii)) it should be called a perverse effect.

(ii) Adversative meaning

The problem of meaning in assessing the adverse/perverse effect of the canon is crucial, because, ultimately, the effect is (or is not) adverse only from the perspective of the significance it has for the literary theorist or even for the literary critic who masters literary theory. Adversative meaning is, therefore, that significance that the observer/analyst associates with an effect that one (or more, or all) functions of the canon produce in the literary field and which is deviated (at the limit, opposite) from the “orthodox” effect. Like the “establishment” of the canon, the identification of adversative meaning is done, somehow, through an inter-subjective vote of those involved in the problematic associated with the canon,⁴⁴ namely what I called the relevant literary community (RLC).

1.7.1. An (incomplete) list of adverse effects of the canon

Based on the conceptual distinctions presented above, I will now list several (classes of) adverse effects that the realization of the role of the canon in literature can have.

- *aristocratization of literary creation*: the influence of the canon can generate a certain elitism of literary creation, in the sense that attention (and due... praise) will be paid only to literary works that (seem to) fall within the predicates of the canon in question, that is, within its requirements of exemplarity and pedagogism. The a-democratism of the canon in literature can, however, have an ambivalent impact, so its mention as a possible perverse effect of canonicity must be treated with caution;⁴⁵

- *canonical conservatism*: the self-catalytic function of the canon also has an ambivalent, although not ambiguous, impact – in addition to orienting and stimulating literary creators to "conform" to the predicates of the canon in question, it can also inhibit departure from the canon. As I have already said before, the canon behaves exactly like a paradigm, and here I refer to what, in paradigm theory (for example, Kuhnian one) is called the sweeping away of anomalies. Obviously, anomalies, from the perspective of any canon, are represented by literary works that do not conform to the respective canon. Now, the ignoring, "with method", that is, on the margin of the canon, of so-called non-canonical literary works (both on the part of literary theorists and literary critics) can have a considerable adverse effect. Moreover, the abandonment of a canon, respectively the emergence of a new canon, is always the result of the action of rebels in relation to the "consecrated" canon;⁴⁶
- *canonical entropy*: by this somewhat precious expression, I want to refer to an effect (possible and even probable) to which the realization of the role of the canon – the creation and maintenance of canonical gravity – through all four established functions can lead. It is about a certain homogenization/non-differentiation that can occur as a result of canonical constraints (exerted by that canon) on literary creation, which could become monotonous, both as literary subjects and as literary writing (poietics).

1.7.2. Canon changing/replacing

Despite its defining endurance, ensured in particular by its self-catalytic (self-replicating) function, the canon is not... indestructible. Consequently, the problem of changing/replacing the canon is not a false problem. The real problem here is identifying the "mechanism" through which such a change/replacement can occur. I will make some rather general considerations.

- (a) if the fundamental sufficiency predicate of the canon is exemplarity,⁴⁷ it follows that changing the canon (more precisely, changing the identity of the canon) can only be done by accepting a new exemplarity that replaces/substitutes the existing one;
- (b) the new exemplarity must present relatively large differences from the old exemplarity in order to be "successful" in the replacement process. I support this assertion as follows:
 - the canon, like any system, possesses two properties that act, moreover, synergistically with the self-catalysis function: (i) the antifragility property; (ii) the autopoieticity property;
 - the antifragility⁴⁸ property has the potential to extract survival-related advantages from the very impact of the disturbances that that system (in this case, the old canon) suffers from the new exemplarity. It follows that, in a first phase of the pressure for change, the old canon will turn that impact in favor of its maintenance;⁴⁹
 - the autopoieticity property, as its name suggests (Gr. αὐτο/auto, i.e., by itself, ποιησις/ poiesis: creation), indicates a capacity of the canon to reproduce itself (self-repair, self-restructuring, self-reorganize, etc.). This property acts either simultaneously with the antifragility property, or after the latter has exhausted its potential to extract advantages from the disturbance in question;
- (c) as long as a threshold of pressure to change/replace the old exemplarity is not exceeded, the canon will resist and, as a result of the canonical gravity exerted in the literary field, will even consolidate;
- (d) we conclude that the change/replacement of the canon is possible, but not through "reforms"⁵⁰ of the exemplarity, but by proposing an exemplarity sufficiently different from the previous one (i.e., by "revolution"). For a certain period of time, the two canons will co-exist (we call this period *canonical cohabitation*) and, in the literary field in question, an osmotic zone will be created in which the two canonical gravities will "fight" with each other. If, as I said, the pressure for change

is not high enough, the old canon will overcome the period of canonical cohabitation and will survive, otherwise, at the end of this period (which has an empirical, not theoretical significance), the new canon will take over the "governance" of literary creation.

From a logical point of view, the following problem arises, of course: is it possible that, after a canon has been replaced by another canon (so an exemplarity has been replaced by another exemplarity), the "deposed" canon will return, as a kind of... negation of the negation? Theoretically yes, but empirically I consider it impossible: the installation of the new canon, that is, of the new exemplarity in literary creation, will destroy⁵¹ the entire cultural, axiological and expectations context that consecrated the old canon. In other words, I do not think we can speak here of cyclicity or of the Nietzschean "eternal return".

VII. The national canon

The question of the national canon involves two aspects: (a) necessity; (b) possibility. I will briefly examine both sides of this problem.

- (a) any literary author is born in a language (his/her native language) and lives culturally in it all his/her life. Accidents may bring him/her to another language, but the deepest feeling and experience will always wear the garment of the native language. In this context, it is not only difficult (from a hermeneutical point of view) but, as I believe, impossible (from a theoretical point of view) to have a supranational canon – accepting that the nation⁵² is the "headquarters" of a given language. Even Mr. Harold Bloom (whom I have quoted earlier in this communication) accepts that natural languages represent an obstacle to inter-canonical comparability although this does not prevent him from accepting the existence of a Western canon. From this point of view, I conclude that there is a necessity (logical, that is, in other words, there is an imperative) of the national character of the canon. Of course, a holistic analyst (pardon the oxymoron) could "wrap up" common dimensions of exemplarity for several national literary fields and, in this way, could decant a supranational canon, but, in my opinion, besides a fatally polemical result, I do not see anywhere the productivity of such an approach – and making simple declarations (or declamations) regarding the existence or functioning of a supranational canon, as Mr. Bloom does with great enthusiasm, is completely futile.
- (b) I discussed, previously, about the authors of the canon, whom I called categorial authors. I showed that the categorial authors of the canon must come from the territory of literary theory, because exemplarity, which is the fundamental identity predicate of the canon, is an extremely difficult, volatile concept that, nevertheless, must be treated, examined and qualified with all hermeneutical rigor (and, I would add, with all the logical tools at hand). I conclude that the possibility of a national canon is equivalent to the possibility that literary theory in a given national field can assume this (I would say) professional duty and, thus, provide literary criticism with the anchor in relation to which the phenomenology of the national literary field could be ordered from the perspective of canonicity.

VIII. Evolutionary features in the canon

A fundamental aspect in the problematic associated with the canon is, of course, its kinematics. As I suggested above, the canon is an extremely conservative artifact, but not indestructible. On this basis, we can logically draw only one conclusion: the canon has great robustness⁵³ in the face of the pressure of change, that is, of inter-canonical "competition", but, even in the event that this robustness gives way, we have seen that it still has two lines of defense/salvation: antifragility, respectively autopoieticity.⁵⁴ If, however, after exploiting antifragility, autopoieticity also proves powerless, then the canon in question has no choice but to evolve. I therefore believe that an inter-canonical competition (*Nota bene*: let us note that this is a species of inter-paradigmatic competition) will not lead to the disappearance of the old canon and its replacement by a new canon, but will result in the evolution of the old canon into the new canon. Since the issue of evolutionism in the matter of the canon is too important to be sent to the level of a paragraph (literary theorists have, in this sense, a fascinating field of

exploration, in my opinion), I will make here only a few brief considerations of an evolutionary nature of the canon.

- (a) the *genotype* of the canon in literature is exemplarity itself. Therefore, the mutation⁵⁵ (to preserve the established terminology) that manifests itself at the level of the canon in force is exerted as pressure on the change of exemplarity;
- (b) the *phenotype* of the canon is represented by the canon itself; the canon, as such, is subject to selection that will ultimately lead to the acceptance or not of the mutation that occurred in exemplarity;
- (c) *fitness* is represented by the degree to which the mutation in question responds to the expectations that have arisen in the literary field regarding the canon;
- (d) *selection* represents the process by which the community of the literary field (authors, theorists, critics) accepts (or not) the fitness resulting from the integration of the mutation into the phenotype – this integration will manifest itself at the level of the functions of the canon, not at the level of the role of the canon, the latter representing a defining constant of the concept of (any conceivable) canon. A continuum of such mutations, validated by a continuum of selections, will represent exactly the different phases/stages of evolution of the canon, as an effect of inter-canonical competition. Of course, I have in mind “standard” evolutionism, i.e., a gradual one, although a saltationist evolution, i.e., sudden and radical (as happens in societal evolutionism and even in biological evolutionism) can also occur. But, as I was saying, this topic deserves a systematic exploration, based on a dedicated research program.

IX. Is there a typology of the canon?

A discussion on the possibility of a typology of the canon is, in my opinion, inevitable in a theory that aims at a general examination of the problem of the canon in literature. I will address two crucial issues in this context, before taking a position on the issue of the typology of the canon.

A first issue that arises is the following: does it make sense to establish canons on literary genres? My answer is negative and is based on the following considerations:

- the exemplarity of the literary work (which represents the *eidos* of the canon in literature) is independent of the literary genre in which a particular literary work is created. This assertion is quite obvious given the fact that literary genres differ from each other in poietics (prosody, writing), not in aesthetic value or pedagogism;
- therefore, exemplarity can be found (although, obviously, in different, specific literary expression) in any literary genre;⁵⁶
- in conclusion, once a canon is established/accepted, it covers all literary genres, which makes it superfluous to distinguish canons by literary genres.

A second issue that needs to be examined is the following: does establishing canons on national literary (cultural) fields, i.e., establishing national canons, make sense? My answer is affirmative and is based on the following considerations:

- although the same literary genres are practiced in all national literary fields, those national fields emerge and evolve in different integrating cultures;
- cultural differences between national literary fields manifest themselves not only at the level of language (ordinary/civil, respectively literary) – which is an obstacle that can, however, be overcome by a good translation – but, above all, from a much broader perspective: values, history, traditions, social psychology, anthropology, etc.;

- under these conditions, exemplarity (however defined) cannot circulate “freely” between national literary fields because, as one might say, these fields are immiscible with each other from the perspective of exemplarity. Indeed, the exemplarity supported by the canon is a quintessence of all the cultural particularities of a nation, which particularities specifically “color” the national literary fields, which excludes the (valid) construction of a supranational/international/global canon;
- in conclusion, I believe that there can only be one canon of national literature, in the sense in which I believe it is legitimate to speak only of a national canon. *Nota bene*: of course, the national anchor in establishing the possibility and validity/legitimacy of the canon in literature can enter (but this will not happen in the present material) into the current debate at a global level regarding the nation, the national, nationalism and the like (see also the positioning of postmodernism with its slogan: political correctness). Dear readers, although I announced that this will be the last episode in the series dedicated to the issue of canon in literature, I ask for your patience and tolerance to endure one more episode, as I believe that the fundamental issue of canon – the exemplarity of the literary work – deserves a more analytical and... rambling discussion. So, in the last episode I will resume the issue of exemplarity as the *eidos* of the canon in literature.

X. Again, on exemplarity

1.8. The species of exemplarity

As I have shown (or, at least, I have claimed/proposed), exemplarity constitutes the *conditio sine qua non* of the eligibility of a literary object (literary work) in the canon, while pedagogism is, on the one hand, involved in literariness (through the aesthetic closure of the literary work), that is, it has a quasi-necessary character, and, on the other hand, it can represent a condition for strengthening exemplarity.⁵⁷

In this context, a synergy effect of the exemplarity of the literary work appears. In fact, I believe that two such synergy effects can be identified: (a) a synergy effect of sufficiency predicates – which I will call *representativeness*; (b) a synergy effect of new necessity predicates – which I will call *scalability*. I will show, below, that these two synergy effects lead, in fact, to two species of manifestation of exemplarity which, consequently, constitute themselves as a genus.

(a) ($\mathcal{R}$) Representativeness

The sufficiency predicates of exemplarity, as they were introduced above ensure, taken in their entirety and in the necessary interactions among them, an exemplarity of a higher order, which I would call *representativeness*. In this context, I will examine two issues: (i) the synergistic phenomenon through which sufficiency predicates generate (cause) representativeness; (ii) the consecration of representativeness as a species of exemplarity.

- es_1 ensures the substitutability⁵⁸ of the social context in the poietic fabric of the literary work, which means that that literary work can “cover” a wide social space (at the limit, any imaginable social space), a property of a nature to confer the representativeness of the work in question for that set of social contexts;
- es_2 ensures the substitutability of the “story”⁵⁹ in the literary work in question with any other “story”. This substitutability has, however, its limits (as in the case of the one in the predicate es_1 , by the way), in the sense that the “story” in question must be part of a relatively homogeneous genre of such plots. Consequently, this predicate also leads, through this substitutability, to the formation of the representativeness of the literary work in question;
- es_3 ensures the prosodic (writing) unity within the literary work. Unlike the sufficiency predicates es_1 and es_2 , which deliver an external representativeness, extensible to the entire literary field, the sufficiency predicate es_3 delivers, so to speak, an internal representativeness, extensible only to the

level of the literary object in question. Formally, we have, therefore (note the synergy effect of the sufficiency predicates of exemplarity with $\mathbb{S}^s$):

$$\begin{pmatrix} es_1 \\ es_2 \\ es_3 \end{pmatrix} \xrightarrow{\mathbb{S}^s} \mathcal{R}$$

(b) ($\mathcal{S}$) Scalability

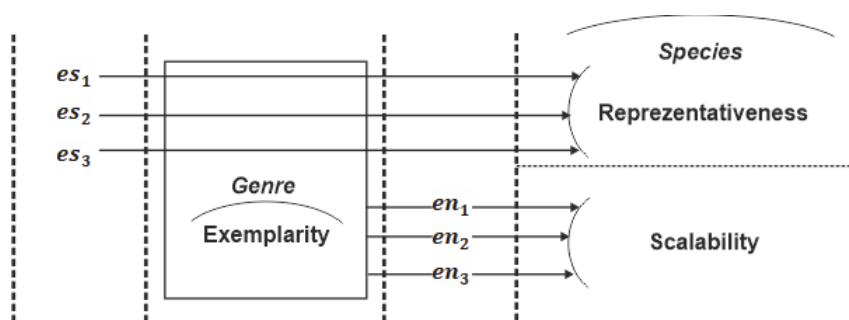
The new necessity predicates of exemplarity, as they were introduced above, ensure, taken in their entirety and in the necessary interactions among them, an exemplarity of a higher order, which I would call *scalability*. In this context, I will examine two issues: (i) the synergistic phenomenon by which new necessity predicates generate (cause) scalability; (ii) the consecration of scalability as a species of exemplarity.

- (i) en_1 ensures the horizontal extension of exemplarity, in the sense of attracting more and more new literary works into the canonical wave in question. Therefore, this new necessity predicate achieves, in a generic sense, a multiplication of the “scale” of the respective exemplarity, which refers, of course, to the concept of scalability of that exemplarity;
- (ii) en_2 ensures the validation, on an ever-increasing scale, of new literary objects, as being within the “range” of canonical eligibility, an aspect, again, of a nature to confer scalability to the literary object involved;
- (iii) en_3 ensures the retention, in the “canonical field” of interest, of the targeted literary work,⁶⁰ an aspect which, obviously, refers directly to the scalability property of exemplarity.

Formally, we have, therefore (note the synergy effect of the new necessity predicates of exemplarity with $\mathbb{S}^n$):

$$\begin{pmatrix} en_1 \\ en_2 \\ en_3 \end{pmatrix} \xrightarrow{\mathbb{S}^n} \mathcal{S}$$

I suggest, in a synoptic way, the way in which the two synergistic effects are formed, as species of exemplarity.



1.9. Particular vs. universal in exemplarity

Accepting the two synergistic effects of the predicates of exemplarity raises the issue of the “localization” of exemplarity from the perspective of philosophical (but also literary) categories: particular vs. general (or, at the limit, universal).⁶¹ In other words, the following question must be examined: as a result of representativeness, respectively scalability, is exemplarity illustrated more adequately (or, possibly, exclusively) by the particular or by the general/universal? I will present my opinion in the following:

- art/literature, aims at the general/universal, but the expression of the general is made exclusively through the particular, for example, through the concrete;⁶²
- therefore, there is an option, which is, in fact, inevitable, between the particular and the general/universal in exemplarity, but this option is manifested on different planes, which should not

be confused: one plane is that of finality – where the finality is the general/universal, the other plane is that of the method/path – where the method/path is the particular/concrete;⁶³

- since the aforementioned option is made on different levels, we are not dealing, in reality, with an authentic option, the literary work not being free to choose; it will have to aim at (and, as far as possible, obtain) the perception, in the reader, of the universal, by offering him/her, in direct expression, the particular:
- of course, here comes another inevitable element – hermeneutics – which “works” on both the author and the reader, it being desirable that there be a way of communication between the two.

I conclude that exemplarity, precisely through the two synergistic effects discussed above, unambiguously resolves the question posed.

Additional comment

The question can be asked: how independent, from one another, are the two synergistic effects – representativeness and scalability, respectively? My opinion on this matter is as follows:

- representativeness *can* imply (therefore, it does not necessarily imply) scalability, because, for example, if we focus on the literary genre of the novel, the description of a revolutionary social movement, which has a local character, both spatially and temporally, is relevant for any revolutionary movement anywhere and at any time (see *es*₂), *mutatis mutandis*;⁶⁴
- scalability, in turn, *can* imply (therefore, it does not necessarily imply) representativeness, in the sense that, to use the example above, the possibility that the description of a revolutionary social movement can “cover” wider spaces or longer durations may signify that that description is representative;
- this overlap of mutual possibilities (but, as I said, not necessarily of mutual causalities) between representativeness and scalability suggests a *sui-generis* co-evolution of the two synergistic effects, so that representativeness is augmented by scalability, and conversely, scalability is augmented by representativeness.

1.10. False exemplarity

Another problem that arises (or can be theoretically formulated) is the one that concerns false exemplarity (or, equivalently, non-exemplarity). The identification of false exemplarity⁶⁵ is done with the help of a logical syllogism of the *modus tollens*⁶⁶ type. In this sense, I make the following considerations.

- the false exemplarity of a literary object is proven by the absence of at least one of the synergistic effects of exemplarity, as they were introduced above. This finding can be formalized as follows:

$$\bar{E} = (\bar{\mathcal{R}}) \vee (\bar{\mathcal{S}}) \vee (\bar{\mathcal{R}} \wedge \bar{\mathcal{S}})$$

- false exemplarity is difficult to identify at the level of the innocent reader,⁶⁷ therefore it must be pursued, through systematic procedures of literary analysis, by those intellectually and (desirably) vocationally entitled to do so: literary theorists, respectively literary critics;
- the most common case of false exemplarity is the one in which either representativeness or scalability is mimicked.⁶⁸ This mimicry can be, in principle, of two kinds, both based on “illegal” inferences between representativeness and scalability:
 - forcing *representativeness from scalability*: although scalability is obvious, representativeness is not so obvious, but its imposition is forced, extracting it, through an invalid inference,⁶⁹ from scalability:

$$(\mathcal{S}) \xrightarrow{\text{invalid}} (\mathcal{R})$$

- forcing *scalability from representativeness*: although representativeness is obvious, scalability is not so obvious, but its imposition is forced, extracting it, through an invalid inference, from representativeness:

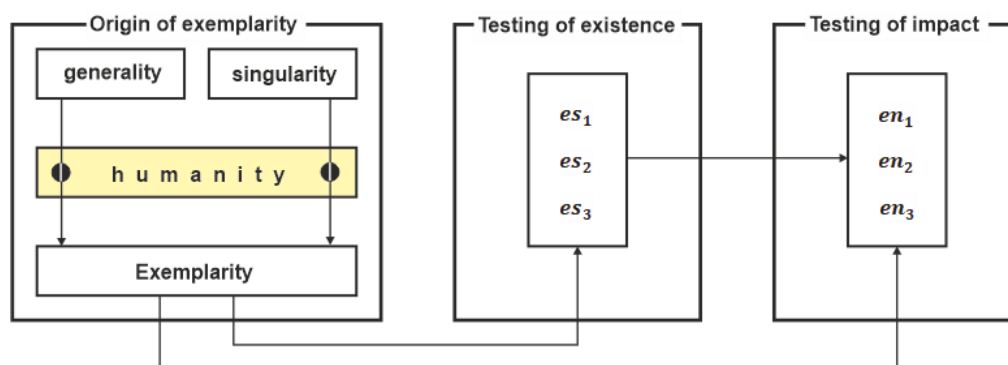
$$(\mathcal{R}) \xrightarrow{\text{invalid}} (\mathcal{S})$$

1.11. An extra mentioning

Exemplarity can easily be confused with generality. Thus, a literary idea that seems to “cover” a very wide (possibly, complete) sphere of a living space, whether individual or social, and which is, therefore, general, can be taken as being, *eo ipso*, exemplary. But then the question arises, which is truly relevant: what should be understood, in the end, by exemplarity? My opinion is the following:

- testing the exemplarity of a given literary object (see point 4, above) is not the same as exemplarity itself, so exemplarity must be defined from a perspective separate from its testability/testing;
- I believe that exemplarity must aim at humanity – by humanity I understand a minimal set of attributes of the human being, somehow timeless, that is, generic, perhaps a combination of attributes that we know that man possesses and attributes that we consider desirable for man to possess. For example, we know that man is selfish and, perhaps, we would like him/her to be altruistic, we know that man is under the empire of nature (for example, s/he pursues biological survival regardless of the price to be paid for its achievement) but we would like him/her to be under the empire of culture (for example, self-esteem or freedom to prevail over the instinct of preservation, in other words, the price of survival cannot be so high as to represent the loss of self-esteem or freedom), etc.;
- in addition, exemplarity must imply the formal repeatability of the literary plot that is contained in the literary idea in question. A unique plot – for example, the fall of communism – cannot access exemplarity unless, under the cover of the phenomenon of the end of the 20th century, the idea (or the related plot) of the necessary (i.e., inevitable) fall of any political dictatorship is constructed.

At the opposite pole, so to speak, exemplarity can also be confused with singularity. Thus, an out-of-the-ordinary case (strange, as Bloom says), that is, an exceptional plot, cannot have exemplarity unless, as above, under the explicit cover of the plot, aspects of humanity are hidden that can always, at least, in principle, erupt into similar events that, at the limit, can be, in turn, singular. To systematize the above, the following graph may be useful.



NOTES

- [1] Typology is a logical classification, while taxonomy is an empirical classification – the canon, regardless of the field in which it is considered, is a logical-empirical classification mix.
- [2] Classification is an operation of discrimination between individuals (it does not matter their nature: people, social movements, plants, theories, religions, revolutions, celestial bodies, etc.). Being a discrimination, criteria are needed to generate the discrimination in question.

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- [3] Whether and to what extent normality is equivalent to the majority (as is considered, *axiomatically*, in democracy) is a difficult question that will be ignored here, although it is not at all an ignorable problem. In fact, Kuhn called science that remains within the operational framework of a given paradigm *normal science* (normal, of course, in relation to that paradigm, the phrase normal science therefore having an intrinsic/relative definitional character).
 - [4] The term literature also comes from a Latin term, namely *littera*, which means letter..
 - [5] I remind the reader that the suggestion of this predicate for the property of literariness belongs to the great linguist Jakobson..
 - [6] And, by the way, in the case of slang as well.
 - [7] Treating the concept of aesthetics in the impressionistic-mysterious manner, of initiatory officiating in an impenetrable esotericism, typical of so many critical (but also theoretical, less often) approaches, should not... impress anyone – the essence of a concept does not lie in whispered vagueness, on the contrary.
 - [8] However, the excesses of postmodernism could also lead to "literary creations" of the type of covers between which are contained hundreds of... empty pages, with the subtle, desired meaning: "there is nothing to say as a text" – here, even such an obvious predicate of literariness can be violated with the glee of postmodernists.
 - [9] The concept of literary space is implicit in common language, although a rigorous definition, based on logic (more precisely, through sufficiency predicates, which represent a generalization of the Aristotelian definition of... definition), would not be superfluous. We consider that the literary space has language as its "border", regardless of whether the linguistic space coincides or not with the political space (national, state).
 - [10] Obviously, the literary critical expression is, in turn, polemical, from the same perspectives in which the expression literary canon has proven to be polemical. It can, however, be accepted that, in part (probably, in large part, although not in the majority), works of literary theory can also be literary works in themselves – let us not forget that some great critics have actually written literary works and some works of literary criticism contain undoubted elements of literariness (see, for example, the so-called impressionist literary criticism).
 - [11] Perhaps every literary critic should be presumed to aspire to the status of literary theorist.
 - [12] In the case of the first two sufficiency predicates of the concept of exemplarity, testing by counterfactuality has, from a logical point of view, the content and meaning known as *modus tollens*: (1) $A \rightarrow B$; (2) $\bar{B}$; (3) $\bar{A}$.
 - [13] This time, the testing is done by means of what is known as *modus ponens*: (1) $A \rightarrow B$; (2) A ; (3) B . Or, in the mirror: (1) $A \rightarrow B$; (2) $\bar{A}$; (3) $\bar{B}$.
 - [14] Of course, the discussion can be generalized/abstracted to refer to any artistic work, not only to literary work, but, for now, the "target" of my considerations is limited to literature.
 - [15] One of the main obstacles to commensurability is the very fact that poietics is only accessible to the analyst "dressed" in stylistic clothing, it is a... stylized poietics. (*Nota bene*: here the term stylized does not have the elliptical meaning of common language).
 - [16] All the new necessity predicates lead, through a *sui generis* synergy effect, to a topology, from the perspective of exemplarity, of the literary space, a topology that will be adjudged, later, by the canon (or canonization).
 - [17] The term *hub* is borrowed from the theory of networks (information networks, social networks, etc.), and is systematized in the specialized literature by a (currently) prestigious researcher of Romanian origin.
 - [18] Moreover, my "theory" about... literary theory is or claims to be of an evolutionary type, without rejecting structuralism which, as I believe, must be integrated into an evolutionary theory founded on three pillars: logicism, structuralism, and historicism. The evolutionary paradigm, within which I consider being productive to discuss the concept of canon in literature, and the phenomenology of canon in literature, must integrate other two concepts/processes, established in literature by two other Romanians: *entropy* (brought from thermodynamics to the economic/social field), respectively *dendritic interaction* (based on the constructal principle or constructal law).
 - [19] The suggestion of an evolutionary process in the matter, involving selection and fitness (see the immediately preceding communication) on the "market" of canons is particularly strong – I will return to the issue in a broader and more systematic exposition.
 - [20] The concept of *relevant literary community* (RLC) is, of course, problematic and must, in turn, be clarified from a logical perspective, that is, of the referential in question – we postpone, for the moment, this clarification and rely on the "civil"/common, quite suggestive understanding of the phrase in question..
 - [21] The concept of paradigm is seen, here, in the sense introduced by Thomas Kuhn.
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- [22] For the justification of the fashionable term in relation to postmodernism, see our essay “Automodernism in Literature – an Autopoietic Modernism”, which was published in *Caiete critice/Critical Notebooks*, no. 2/2025 (a Romanian academic publication)
- [23] Harold Bloom, *The Western Canon. Books and the School of the Ages*, Harcourt Brace & Company, 1994.
- [24] I leave aside, out of consideration for the illustrious theorist Bloom, the fact that originality and anxiety of influence are contradictory to each other under the same rapport (as Aristotle requires), that is, regarding the canonizability of the same work (or of the same author – *Nota bene*: Bloom considers the canon as referring to authors, while I propose that the eligible object for canonization is the literary object/literary work, the author being able to “come” into the canon through the wave of the work). Of course, there is also the case where it is precisely the anxiety of influence that generates, as a “rescue” solution, precisely originality which, often, can also manifest itself as strangeness (perhaps, I would add, a sought-after strangeness, as Joyce did, I think, both at the level of conception and at the level of prosody).
- [25] Walt Whitman, for the literary space of the United States of America (see Harold Bloom's considerations in the book mentioned in note 23 – a book as aggressive as it is unbearably sententious, that is, excelling in doxa, not in episteme).
- [26] Both in the case of quantitative dominance and in that of qualitative influence, “accidents” are not excluded, in the sense that a certain work, being canonical, exerts both one and the other of the two effects mentioned – but that work is already canonical according to other criteria.
- [27] I have discussed above about an effect of canonical gravity, but it is about an influence (to use the same expression) within the canon, that is, an influence that generates, first, and foremost, and essentially, the exemplarity proper to the canon that generates that effect of canonical gravity. In other words, canonical gravity is not a simple qualitative influence (which, if it manifests itself as anxiety of influence, can even lead to leaving the canon) but it simply represents an impulse to replicate the canon – one of the manifestations of this replication is the extensive opening of the canon.
- [28] I will evoke, here, James Joyce, with his strange literary object called *Finnegans Wake*, which features texts formulated in no less than 16 languages..
- [29] Authentic art does not align itself with the level of the receiver but raises (or must tend to raise) the receiver to the level of art.
- [30] I remind the reader allergic to the ethics in art that Schiller (presumably to “deal” with aesthetics) spoke of... social aesthetics, precisely in the sense of harmony of inter-subjectivities within society. Of course, there is no reminiscence in the present discussion of the crude and dangerous (both for art and for freedom and democracy) *east-ethical* concept. *Nota bene*: there seems to be a strong presupposition, both among theorists and literary critics (possibly also among authors) that the “sum” of the aesthetics and the ethics in a literary work is an invariant, or a game of constant sum, and that, consequently, it is enough to remove the ethical (that is, what I called, with a generalizing term in relation to both the ethical and the aesthetic: the pedagogical) from a literary work (or to ignore it) so that, *eo ipso*, the weight of the aesthetical increases!
- [31] Here I firmly separate myself from Bloom’s careless assertion that the literary work does not change the receiver in any way. If there is any reader who can swear that, having read Dostoevsky, s/he remained the same person as s/he was before the act of reading in question, I am ready to reflect more deeply on my position on this matter.
- [32] Why *exo*? Because the literary work, once written, leaves traces, often decisive for the subsequent literary course, primarily on its author: we reserve, for this last effect, the term *endo-imprinting*.
- [33] I will discuss the problem of the functions of language or, more particularly, of the literary language on another occasion, because it is a rather complicated and, moreover, obscure problem.
- [34] It immediately follows that the predicates of sufficiency “give birth” to the canon, while the predicates of necessity “are born from” the canon.
- [35] Unfortunately, Bloom offers no logic for his allegations, he proclaims and then ecstasies over his own proclamations (much like his favorite Dante) – however, he has some valuable insights that deserve a deep examination in order to tie them into a theory of the canon.
- [36] The incommensurability of paradigms is discussed and argued by Thomas Kuhn in his work “The Structure of Scientific Revolutions”, The University of Chicago Press, 2012.
- [37] Here in the original sense (diffuse, imprecise, purely qualitative) introduced by Maxwell.
- [38] As in any system of criteria, the analysis of the criteria, taken two by two, must simultaneously verify the following conditions: consistency (non-contradictory), independence (non-redundancy), completeness (finality).
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- [39] Of course, I assume that it is a public existence, that is, an existence about which the authors (both current and potential) are aware, in one way or another, at a higher or lower level of understanding.
- [40] I remind you that here I am using a license, replacing (in order to reduce the pedantic nature of the communication) the correct phrase "the field of literature" with the phrase "the literary field", because, indeed, the concept of field does not verify the predicates of literariness, in order to qualify as a... literary field.
- [41] The problem with Mr. Bloom's way of considering that a canon is "populated" with authors and not with their works is that we can imagine the following counterfactual (and, in fact, not very counterfactual) exercise: if an author who is considered canonical begins, at a certain moment, to write in a way contrary to the way s/he wrote until then, what happens to his/her canonicity? Is s/he canonical up to that point or is s/he no longer canonical after that point? Mr. Bloom has serious (logical) difficulties in supporting/maintaining his point of view. And yes, an author can produce both canonical works and non-canonical works (or works that can be associated with another canon, possibly).
- [42] The problem of the literary value of a literary work/of literature is a problem in itself, difficult but fundamental – it will be addressed in another communication.
- [43] The question can be asked: is there any difference between canon's functions and canonical functions? From a semantic point of view, there are, of course, differences between the two concepts, but, at least for the present communication, I consider that the functions of the canon represent canonical functions, especially since I have shown that they strictly verify the conditions/criteria on the basis of which they were identified and described.
- [44] Things are no different in the field of science (natural science or social science or human science), where a result proposed by a researcher or a community of researchers is examined and voted on (of course, in *sui generis* way) by the researchers involved in the subject of that result.
- [45] The uncontrolled explosion in recent decades of literary "works", as an expression of... the democratization of society, is, in my opinion, an adverse effect (perhaps, within certain limits, perverse one) precisely of the non-existence or explicit and publicly non-acceptance of a canon in our literature. And, returning to the idea at the beginning of this note, literary criticism, especially welcome criticism, has a great (and sacred) duty to develop authentic evaluation grids for this rather suspicious creative "productivity".
- [46] Such rebellions, which have led to renewals of creation (both scientific and artistic – in painting, literature, sculpture, architecture, music – religious or political) are frequent in history and, moreover, well-known. *Nota bene*: someone interested in this issue could try to document and elaborate a history (either factual or intellectual) of these paradigmatic or, equivalently, canonical replacements. Needless to say, such an elaboration should have an evolutionary approach.
- [47] As I have shown previously, pedagogism (the second predicate of sufficiency) has a more non-specific character than exemplarity, therefore I consider that, in fact, the identity (personality) of the canon is given, ultimately, and dominantly and relevantly, by the claimed exemplarity.
- [48] The concept of antifragility was introduced into theoretical reflection in 2012, by Nassim Nicholas Taleb, a former Wall Street worker (in financial derivatives) who began a theoretical generalization of the findings made in practical activity (see his work *Antifragile. What do we gain from disorder*, Random House).
- [49] My communication, as having a theoretical/conceptual/logical character, I do not go into details/examples about how the property of antifragility will contribute to the defense of the old canon in relation to the pressure of change.
- [50] Reform is the postponement (often, the substitution) of revolution.
- [51] In the positive sense of the phrase "creative destruction", consecrated by Schumpeter in the field of technological innovation (*Nota bene*: the phrase was not coined by Schumpeter, it is previously found in Sombart and Marx), but which is valid, so to speak, in any change, whether reformative or revolutionary.
- [52] The distinction between people and nation is superfluous in the present discussion, although things would not be so if the subject of the discussion were different.
- [53] The property of robustness refers to resistance/inertia to change induced by disturbances.
- [54] I applied the principle of autopoieticity to the logical examination of the postmodernist current in literature, by proposing to use the name automodernism (see note 22).
- [55] Obviously, the mutation has a double causality: a random one, generated by literary works that do not aim at this (i.e., the change of exemplarity), and a deliberative one, generated by literary works (in fact, of course, by the authors in question) that have the purpose of modifying the respective exemplarity.
- [56] I propose an abstract typology/topology of literary genres in my article "Aphorism (Part I) – Aphorism as a Literary Genre", published in Romanian publication *Poezia, toamna* (Poetry, Autumn) 2024.
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- [57] A more pedantic analyst could even show that pedagogism can constitute a predicate of exemplarity, of course, not a predicate of sufficiency, but a new predicate of necessity.
- [58] Of course, it is not a question of mechanical substitutability, in its particularity, but of structural one, in its generality. The structural character of the substitutability in question refers, obviously, to the formal aspect of this substitutability.
- [59] The term story refers, of course, to the artistic idea (poetic – in poetry, narrative – in prose, dramatic – in theater, etc.).
- [60] The eligibility is “established” by literary theorists, while the actual selection (i.e., the actualization of eligibility) is at the discretion of literary critics. Of course, this does not mean that I establish precise, inalienable and inviolable roles for the two categories of analysts, but only that I suggest the dominant activity desirable for each category.
- [61] I recall that the general is not necessarily universal, because the universal is a general for the general – for example, a universal can encompass several generals (or *genera*), analogously to the way in which the general (or genus) can encompass several species. *Nota bene*: of course, the cases in which the universal is formed by a single general (genus), respectively the general (genus) is formed by a single species, are not logically excluded.
- [62] Science “proceeds” exactly the opposite, it aims at the particular, but the expression/expression is done through the general, for example, through the abstract.
- [63] Here, especially in literary works with a great ideational charge (usually metaphysical), there appears the risk of an excess of discursiveness that subordinates the affective, obliterating it, even suffocating it.
- [64] I remind you, in this context, of the sufficiency predicate of exemplarity es_1 .
- [65] I indicated above seven cases of non-exemplarity, based on the violation of the sufficiency predicates of exemplarity. This time, the testability of exemplarity is more synthetic, referring to the violation of the synergistic effects of both the sufficiency predicates and the new necessity predicates of exemplarity.
- [66] I remind the attentive reader of the logical formula of the syllogism of the *modus tollens* type (which is, as is known, the general testing mode of cognitive truth, the so-called correspondence-truth – *Nota bene*: there are also non-cognitive truths: teleological truth, ethical truth, artistic truth, for example, literary truth. Regarding literary truth, some basic considerations are made in my essay *Poetry – aesthetic structure and ethical function*, published in Poetry, summer 2025).

$$\begin{array}{l} A \rightarrow B \\ \neg B \\ \therefore \neg A \end{array}$$

- [67] By innocent reader I mean the reader who is neither a literary author, nor a literary theorist, nor a literary critic, and who, consequently, comes into contact with the literary work exclusively at the level of perception, therefore without the mediation of an explicit and programmatically assumed hermeneutics, as the three above mentioned categories of “non-innocent” readers do (or should do). Of course, the immense mass of readers is made up of innocent readers.
- [68] Mimicking both synergistic effects is much more difficult, and only authors who, without lacking general intelligence, are driven by ambitions that elude artistic responsibility, succeed.
- [69] As shown above, representativeness and scalability can co-exist, but they are not mutually inferable from a causal point of view (that is, the co-existence is structural, not causal).