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## The Social and Educational Role of Literary Criticism

### O papel social e educacional da crítica literária

JESÚS HERNANDO MOTATO CAMELO\*

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\* Professor of the School of Languages, Universidad Industrial de Santander. Bucaramanga, Santander, Colombia. [gabo06filia03@gmail.com](mailto:gabo06filia03@gmail.com).



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## **A**BSTRACT

This essay is a reflection on the role of criticism in the field of literary studies and the teacher's mission as a guide in the reading of classical texts. It is proposed that criticism plays a role of orientation and persuasion in reading and from it the benefit for the interpretation and evaluation of the literary work.

**Keywords:** criticism, theory, reading, writer, reader.

## **R**ESUMO

Este ensaio é uma reflexão sobre o papel da crítica no campo dos estudos literários e a missão do professor como guia na leitura de textos clássicos. Propõe-se que a crítica desempenhe um papel de orientação e persuasão na leitura e daí o benefício para a interpretação e avaliação da obra literária.

**Palavras-chave:** crítica, teoria, leitura, escritor, leitor.

## Introduction

The points to be discussed in this essay are roughly presented as follows: The social role of criticism, criticism against theory and today's readings. To do this, I propose to make a historical reflection on criticism based on illustrious men and societies. In this sense it is essential to speak of Plato and Aristotle. The first talks about the beauty and aesthetics of the work of art. Ideas very attached to geometric knowledge, based on the idea of harmony and the contemplation of the object; for which to make an abstraction about beauty. The *Hippias mayor* or of the beautiful is precisely that dialogue about the conception of beauty through the contemplation of things and the world, beauty understood as that harmony between man and the world. But beauty in this relationship of man with the world presents a dilemma to be solved and it is the ideological role that exists in the conception of beauty. Ideological in the sense that the beauty of an object made of gold can be beautiful for one person while for another the beauty resides in a palace and not in the gold object. From the misunderstandings, Plato teaches us that the concept of beauty is relative to the conception of the person who contemplates the object. However, how do you understand the previous reflections in the literature? The first thing is contemplation and in it, the harmony between the components of the literary object, be it the novel, the poem or the story. This harmony can occur in the creation of the atmosphere, that empathy between the space and the characters, between the story and the narrative. From the above, it can be said how the story *De gozos y desvelos*, by Roberto Burgos Cantor, recreates that city from the marginality of its characters, who from the music and the rumor of the sea achieve the effect of feeling in a Caribbean city, which may well be called Cartagena given the references to the portal of candies, the walls or the castle of San Felipe.

Now, why do we say that *Lost Paradise* is a beautiful infernal poem? It is not because of the demonic idea. On the contrary, it is for the redemption of the devil and for the unforgiving

way that God is presented to us. Milton presents us with a reflection on the role of the devil as an angel who after his rebellion accepts the mistake and implores the return to Heaven, but God condemns him that he must come down to Earth to tempt man. To this we add the symmetry of the verses in the biblical treatment. Otherwise, Milton not only recreates the destiny and salvation of souls, but the political and religious struggles between knights and Puritans in the background. Thus, the significance of the poem lies largely in the fact that the poetic voice overcomes the chaos of the war era.

In this vein, let's stop a bit here and reflect on what we are reading in Colombia. It is only a stop in the aesthetic task, but it induces a reflection beyond the immediacy of that writing that does not require more than time to review a handful of letters with the eyes. And the content, may be the question. No, the market matters and this brings a lot of revenue to the publishing industry. It's sad, right? Writers of an international projection are in oblivion, despite the magnitude of their work, such is the case of Fernando Cruz Kronfly, Enrique Serrano or Roberto Burgos Cantor himself. The same situation extends to lyrical poets such as the Cartagena poet Rómulo Bustos, the Cauca poet Horacio Benavidez or the short story writer José Zuleta.

In the case of Cruz Kronfly and his novel *La ceniza del libertador* (1987), the beautiful novel about the last days of the liberator Simón Bolívar on his journey along the Magdalena River from Honda to Santa Marta, appears in the academic and cultural ostracism of Colombia. The random life of the hit man or the tinsel life of a model is more interesting as characters of narrative clunkers, but suggestive for a quick and bland reading. This dire reality makes those demanding, diligent and delightful readings of *María*, *La Vorágine*, *La Tejedora de coronas*, *Sin remedio*, *Chango*, *el gran putas*, *La ceiba de la memoria* be for a select group of readers; select in as much they have not been permeated by the curiosity of a reading where the hitman prays before going out to kill

or a young woman who aspires to have a voluptuous bust to achieve social advancement and recognition in her field of women alienated for having an ideal body for modeling. This is in the Colombian daily life, while in the Latin American literary panorama the question falls on those readers who still read Uruguayans Juan Carlos Onetti or Felisberto Hernández; the Argentines Macedonio Fernández, Manuel Mujica Lainez, Silvina Ocampo; to the Brazilians Joao Guimaraes Rosa, Graciliano Ramos, Clarice Lispector or to the Cubans José Lezama Lima, Reinaldo Arenas, among so many writers from our continent and the absolute answer would be with a question: Who are they? In the book that the professor left in the copier they do not appear and will never appear because in the record of the publishing fund they do not represent great sales. This is the university environment; let's not talk about the family environment because there is absolutely no book cult there. There, in this space of the house, the room for the library disappeared and was displaced by the narrow space for the television, because according to modern architects: the family needs fun, recreation and seclusion and that is achieved with television and not books. TV, not books, fulfills that objective. Besides they hinder. What an outrage to reason! it would be said in the Cambalache tango. But with a more historical look, Colombians suffer from the cult of the book: The book is not a useful object nor does it serve a recreational function; as can be seen in countries like Argentina or Cuba. In these, the book is part of the family basket. So, the conclusion is that in Colombia there is little reading. And what role does criticism play? None. Only a few names like Rafael Gutiérrez Girardot or Juan Gustavo Cobo Borda, although there are other names that escape memory, such is Rafael Humberto Moreno Durán, for example.

I return to the reading of the classics and turn to Aristotle and from him I point out or highlight his work as an analyst of the work of art from the aesthetic point of view. Aristotle emphasizes the classification of the work, a classification of which it has been impossible

to understand. While Plato points out that the work of art is an expression of life and the contemplation of the world and objects, Aristotle imposes on us a pre-knowledge of creation or poetics to order the genres of epic, tragedy and comedy, based on the idea of the concept of harmony, since this was primordial to understand the relationship of man with his world in ancient Greece. Years have passed and the ideas of Plato and Aristotle are essential in literary studies, whether for a reflection on the limits of literary genres or to lay the foundations regarding the differences between poetry, drama or the narrative.

All of the above weaves and unweaves the boundaries between literary genres until the moment and the word for the Mexican Master Alfonso Reyes comes when he says that: "Between verse and prose there is no difference in aesthetic hierarchy. The legitimate difference is established between the different uses of the language. One is the common language; another is the language of aesthetic intentions" (1986, p. 113). The above allows us to think that the approaches to the literary work, from the tedious limit or literary boundary, make it deny the why of the word in its function creative or metaphorical. So, you cannot deny the great poetic accent to a huge novel like Pedro Páramo or the drama character to a novel structured in a long monologue like Gran sertón: veredas, by the greatest Brazilian writer, Joao Guimaraes Rosa or the accent metaphysical to a novel like Adán Buenosayres, by the Argentine Leopoldo Marechal.

## **The Social Role of Criticism**

Literary studies at university are of vital importance in the formation and orientation of a reading public, called the student. In this sense, literary criticism and, therefore, critics fulfill a very important social function: guiding the reader through the most select of reading based on criteria of the selection of authors and works. But criticism is associated with literary studies, to a large extent, or with the critic's reading criteria. In the immediately preceding, there is an imbroglio between what the critics offer and what is presented to us by

the literary theory. These two literary expressions need a meeting point and this is achieved in the aesthetic purpose of a reading. The role of criticism guides, recommends readings from aesthetic pleasure. For example, one of the most beautiful books written on William Shakespeare was written by Victor Hugo, entitled *Vida de Shakespeare*. On the other hand, one of the worst approaches to the story *Two friends*, by Guy de Maupassant, is made from semiotics with Algirdas Greimas. So I am putting criticism and theory face to face. I pointed out that these must be found through aesthetics and not through rigid schemes imposed by analytical methods. The latter is costly because it is thought that a course is directed from the tastes of the critic or the teacher and not from the expectations of the reader-student. Here the seduction to reading is more important, and the role of provoking readings that the teacher must fulfill, as well as the enjoyment of the word and thus the student can continue reading a book such as *Bajo el volcán*, *Las mil y una noches*, *Luz de Agosto*, *Los miserables* or *Pedro Páramo* through provocation, the delight in reading and without preventing whether the narrator is intra, *extrahomo* or heterodiegetic. Of the above, it is worth remembering the Brazilian critic when he says that the university academy torpedoes literary criticism and precisely refers to the schemata from some literary theories in their immediacy of readings and with the equivocal and anti-dialectic: application. In this regard, there is room for reflection: the theorists of literature thought their proposals for a generality or for a particular work. Undoubtedly, one must think that a theory was made for a particular work or time, as is the case with Bakhtin with the book *La cultura popular en la edad media y el renacimiento*. Then, it is thought that carnival there is a party, but it turns out that carnival is a conception of time, very typical of European thought in the Middle Ages. However, essays have appeared in the university environment in Colombia talking about carnival in the Colombian novel. From the above, I appeal to Juan José Arreola who says: The purpose of a course is to introduce and approximate, teach

the student to know and judge the works of the spirit. But above all to love them with a conscious and new love, which is the only one that can give us a knowledge of them (1979, p. 72)

This means that there is, in principle, a formative role on the part of the teacher, a role that he fulfills in the selection of works or authors, but done from the literary passion, selected from the perspective of critical writing, focused from the production of aesthetic pleasure. Gabriel García Márquez once said that a good literature course is done with two or three fundamental works. Therefore, it indicates that the problem of the course does not lie in the broad or vague information but in the careful choice of the authors. Also Ernesto Sábato in that exemplary essay, entitled "Sobre los males de la educación" (1979) makes several disquisitions on the role of the teacher in the teaching of literature. One of these evils, which agrees with García Márquez's thinking, is the so-called "encyclopaedia" where literature is not a huge catalog of books and authors, but a reflection on reading and the richness that books offer. Sábato talks about education from the spirit of the young, which in definition can be fragile, generous or indecisive. These steps in reading are the challenges for literary criticism, since they indicate that there is a transforming doing to a dialogue with the literary work.

In accordance with the above, we see that many writers exercise the role of criticism as we see in the reflections of García Márquez and Sábato or in the acute critical texts of Carlos Fuentes, in the neo-baroque disquisitions of Lezama Lima or in the depth and sharpness of the texts of Alejo Carpentier or Jorge Luis Borges. Well, we can speak from literature itself and here it is undoubtedly necessary to speak of the priest and the barber in one of the most transcendental novels of humanity: *El ingenioso hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha*. In it, these two characters exercise criticism from the burning of books, and their judgments are decisive from the idea of what is perishable or ephemeral or also what is important for

the thinking of the time. The chivalric books with the parade of palmerines, amadis and the whole range of knights and fantastic beings are in the forefront of the critical judgment of these two characters; who through pleasant and sententious reading burn or save for posterity many books and a special one for its greatness: Wearing the target, which they consider a treasure of contentment and a mine of pastimes, the Amadís de Gaula also passes to posterity, as a model of knight in Don Quixote. This, in essence, is the role of criticism: to guide the pleasure of reading. Don Alfonso Reyes would say: "And then you have to know how to read, which is not a vulgar exercise. It is a giving and a recovery: an even instantaneous and automatic acceptance of what we read, and a clear exercise of one's own reactions" (1986, p. 116, author's translation)

Now, I return to the idea of Sábato and influence reading in the university academy and return to the reflection of the fragile spirit. It does not take on stony reading challenges because there is no seductive or compelling role of the guide. For example, a student with difficulty assumes the reading of *Paradiso*, by Lezama Lima because it seems difficult or unaffordable due to the use of language and the baroque style present in it; the same happens with *Gran sertao: veredas*, by Guimarães Rosa or *La tejedora de coronas*, by Germán Espinosa. They are works that do not give rise to breath and reading requires rest or breathing. And let's not say anything about *El museo de la novela de la eterna*, by Macedonio Fernández.

Criticism plays a social role from its orientation to the reader. What do I read or what do we read? It is a key question that only the critic can answer. Already from *El Quijote* we can respond to this concern. The famous sixth chapter where the burning of books by the barber and the priest is not only a strong criticism of reading fashion - which is its true role - but also a beautiful lesson on how to do criticism. It is made from seduction, from rhetoric, from argumentation. Criticism seduces insofar as it shows the hidden data

that are present in the work. Thus we can say that behind Don Quixote is Amadís de Gaula. Borges, in an accurate note on the novel by Cervantes, says that Don Quixote is another novel of chivalry. The suggestion takes force as we go to the reading of Amadís de Gaula and we scrutinize in it how it is present in Don Quixote. We can also talk about the presence of Kafka in García Márquez and not from his first stories but in *El otoño del patriarca*. Who knows the Count Westwest in *The Castle*? Nobody, who has seen the patriarch? No one, however, everyone talks about him and everyone fears him. This is the function of criticism: to suggest readings based on the meticulous tracing that the reading of the literary work exercises. That hidden presence of the dictator instills an atmosphere of terror and fear, even if García Márquez's novel is structured in rumor, they told me about it, they told me, very much in the style of Caribbean popular culture; however, that character of all-powerful power is latent in the consciousness of the characters.

Now, is criticism necessary? Let's look at what the writers say. Óscar Wilde in that beautiful text "The Critic as Artist" puts Gilbert and Ernest to discuss. He says:

What is the artwork for? Why not leave the artist alone to create a new world, if he so desires, or else to sketch the world we already know and of which each of us, in my opinion, would get tired if art, with its delicate spirit of selection, did not purify him of selection, purify him for us and give him a momentary perfection? (1986, p. 14)

Who fulfills this role of purification so that the work transcends? The critic from his spiritual position. He encourages the reader to enter that world of which we already know and which the writer presents to us in images and metaphors. We enter the spiritual world of *La Commedia* and then the medieval world from the reading of Dante's work. The descent and ascent is a transit through society, it is a purifying and idealized journey through the world of women. The beautiful Beatriz only exists in the poet's imagination, as it happens

with Don Quixote and Dulcinea, but she is the representation of the medieval ideal of beauty. Closer to our time is Jean Michel Coetzee. *Esperando a los bárbaros*(2004) is the novel of the atrocities of power. It is the racial dictatorship, metaphorized in the journey through the desert. *La llave*(2002), by Junichiro Tanizake, presents us with the secret of the couple and the inviolability of the intimate through the diary. That couple tired of married life set out to remember the past without anyone knowing what they did before. The key is the key so that the conflict is accentuated, because this makes the woman know that her husband read her diary and violated the code of respect for privacy. From the social role of criticism we access these complex and alien cultures. *Los girasoles ciegos* (2004), by the Spanish writer Alberto Méndez, is a novel that offers us the psychological and terrifying meaning of confinement and its strength for the formation of images of fear, censorship and filth of priests in full Spanish Civil War. Not in vain from 2004 to 2008 there were 25 editions. In the same way, we can mention that beautiful novel in which the character, that is, the poet, goes for a walk to contemplate beauty in the midst of the absurdity of social conventions, such as *El paseo* (1996), by the Swiss writer Robert Walser.

I return to the approaches of Oscar Wilde and point out that at first glance it seems that his intention is to reject the role of the critic, especially if we stick to the last point. On the ease of understanding of the work and how on the explanation it balances the meanings of the interpretation, analysis and evaluation of the literary work. The first two concepts carry the weight of literary theory and therefore of method, which will be discussed later. The theory guides, directs the approaches to the work, in some it schematizes and restricts. This makes it different from literary criticism. Understanding implies evaluation and here the author-society-work is present in the reading exercise. The latter is easily understood when we establish the relationship with these three categories or concepts.

The following idea emerges from the above: we understand Rimbaud from "Una temporada en el infierno" if this set of poems is integrated into the poetic universe, the social world of the time and the poet's vision. In this way we establish an approach to that city, to that terribly desolate and apocalyptic Paris of a tragedy that heralds the end of the 19th century. Also Una temporada en el infierno is the announcement to a new century, full of chaos, uncertainty and dehumanization.

In this work-society and author empathy, the critic highlights the spirit of the poet in his aesthetic work, in his process of apprehension of a world and in the purification of the word and the consolidation of images and metaphors or as Wilde would say "the true rhythmic life of the word". In essence, what criticism does is the art of writing as a means of telling, simply; that's how the Greeks conceived it. This is precisely the mission of criticism: to show the reader the art of writing. Criticism in this sense has a well-deserved definition, inasmuch as it makes the literary work explicit, simple and pleasant and in this aspect it fulfills its social role of guide and guide.

In short, Óscar Wilde highlights the spirit of the time in the author-critic relationship. Literary creation is enshrined and, of course, reproduced and here we understand Wilde's idea: A time without criticism is a time in which art does not exist, or it remains immobile, hieratic and is limited to the reproduction of consecrated types. In this sense we are facing two concepts borrowed from biology: phenotype and genotype. The first helps us to trace the inheritance of the literary work, in genetic terms, the inheritance. The example of Maria is illustrative for the case of the nineteenth century. This novel carries some "romantic genes"; from which other novels inherit, a deformed inheritance from the realm of their progenitor. I am referring to the novels *Manuela*, *Toá*, *Tránsito* and *FLejos del nido*. Good for our literary history with respect to late romanticism, but the mimesis of Isaacs's novel and the time remains in the immediacy of the anecdote.

The previous novels take from their romantic model the descriptions of the rural and bucolic environment, the sense of regional customs, which generate the so-called manners literature, the violent drama of couples in love dissolved by the gamonal and consequently the tragic outcome; announced in the explicitness of the narrative framework. Thus, from *María* they take the loving and the seasoning of the sentimental is given from the spurious of the anecdote and the treatment of language, wrapped in the bombastic handling of regionalism.

In closing this part of the social work of criticism, it is essential to reach the thought of Alfonso Reyes. The Mexican thinker and teacher - referring to the uncomfortable position of the critic and his role before the poet and the writer - says about it: "Criticism, this spoilsport; received, always, like the rent collector, suspiciously and with the doors half open. The poor muse, when she bumps into this bastard sister, twists her fingers, knocks on wood, runs as soon as she can to disinfect herself" (1993, p. 92, author's translation).

It is the misunderstanding of criticism from the subjectivity that it assumed in past years. Criticism was made from the taste, that is, of what the spirit evaluates with the appreciation of I like it or I do not like it. It is enough to remember Don Quixote to say that in art tastes do not prevail to evaluate a literary work; the objectivity that comes from knowing and living with books and the discipline of opinion is required. Let us remember the words of Guillermo de Torre when he read *La hojarasca*: "You're no good as a writer, do something else" were very harsh words that only the compassionate presence of the wise Catalan and the solidarity and friendship of his coastal cronies such as Cepeda Samudio, Germán Vargas, among others, diminished the anguish and despair of the young García Márquez.

One aspect of this chapter on criticism and its social role is the posterity of the book and this is achieved over time. Why do we still read *La odisea*, *La commedia* or *El Quijote*? Well, more

that criticism is the transcendence of the work and here it is worth saying that time is the best critic, because the longer the literary work remains in the minds of the readers or the more penetrating in society, the more valid the reading becomes.

## Criticism versus Literary Theory

From Aristotle with his *Arte poético* Horacio's poetry studies, literature has been subjected to the patterns of a method and to the classification according to what was written and its intention: verse or prose, and from then on the classification in genres. Subsequently, the taxonomy of the author and his work runs, mainly in Latin America, with generational schemes. José Juan Arrom, faced with the enormous amount of writings accumulated over five centuries in this new continent, had the conviction of ordering authors and works according to the chronological conception. Before, Julio Leguizamón had attempted a history of Latin American literature (Buenos Aires, 1945) in four stages: 1. Colonial letters. 2. Time of the revolution. 3. Romanticism 4. Modernism and contemporary times.

Luis Alberto Sánchez in 1944 offers a historiographical review of Latin American literature with the following chronological divisions: Aboriginal literature. 2. Discovery until the end of the Baroque period. 3. Examine the ideological changes of the 18th century. 4. Towards romanticism. In 1949, Pedro Henríquez Ureña in *Las corrientes literarias en la América hispánica* clearly brings together the following stages:

Creation of a new society (1492-1600),  
Flourishing of the colonial world (1600-1800),  
Declaration of intellectual independence (1800-1830)  
Romanticism and anarchy (1830-1860)  
The period of organization (1860-1890)  
Pure literature (1890- 1920) Today's problems (1920-1940)

However, a careful review of these classifications leaves out the Brazilian literature, and even worse, when they are

unknown or they forget some names such as Joao Guimaraes Rosa, Graciliano Ramos, in Brazil; Pablo Palacios, in Ecuador; Julio Garmendia, in Venezuela and Felisberto Hernández, in Uruguay; among others, in the generational studies of Arrom. This classification is a reference, but the aforementioned is due to the precarious information between the countries. In this same orientation appear the works of Enrique Anderson Imbert, Fernando Alegría, José Promis, and in Colombia the famous work *Evolution of the novel in Colombia*, by Antonio Curcio Altamar.

Even more, the taxonomy classifies José Asunción Silva as the most outstanding Colombian modernist poet, when by attitude and existential position he is a romantic poet, but this idea is hardly affirmed because it is going against the current of what is already established. He is modernist at the time, but he is romantic in his spiritual attitude.

A big leap in the literary critical relation to literary theory brings me to the sociology of literature. Lukács and Goldmann provide us with an approach to the literary work from the theses of Marxism. The statements are very valid insofar as it recognizes that the writer or poet is a witness of the time. The concepts of homology, social group and world view are references to deepen the aesthetic work of the author and the structure of the literary work. Antonio Cándido says about it: "In fact, before it was tried to show that the value and meaning of a work depend on whether or not it expresses a certain aspect of reality and that this aspect constituted its essence" (1995, p. 175, author' translation). Obviously this sociological conception allows the knowledge of that social reality, but the danger lies in the affiliation and believing that the literary work, whether it is narrative or poetry, reflects a society. These excesses led to radical approaches during the seventies and outbursts were committed such as not reading Borges, in Latin America or Ana Amajtova, Platonov and Isaak Bábel among many in the former Soviet Union.

Otherwise, we can know the social, cultural and ideological environment from an approach to the literary work from this sociological perspective. We interpret and contextualize the France of the 19th century in the reading of Victor Hugo, Flaubert, Zola, Maupassant, for example. We approach the Brazil of the 19th century in the reading of José de Alencar. Colonels and territorial expansionism in the northeastern countryside become approachable to our conception of that world from the perspective of social homology. The same can happen with the work of Guimaraes Rosa. The mythical and magical sertão of jagunzos and fazendeiros is understandable in relation to work-author-society. Machado de Assis with his urban tales gives us a glimpse of understanding Rio de Janeiro as we see some characters socially tempered by what they will say about their neighbors. The urban society of his stories reveals that world of petty bourgeois ties and characters plunged into the decline of games and vice.

Antonio Cándido with respect to sociological theory says that "Considering the social factor, we could try to determine if it only contributes the material that serves as a vehicle to guide the creative current: environment, customs, group characteristics, ideas; which in the words of Lukács would be equivalent to asking if said factor only intervenes to make possible the realization of aesthetic value" (1995, p. 177) In other words, the Brazilian critic questions the author's literary or poetic training and to what extent this empathy is decisive and if the other: their training and their influences are overwhelmed by the social.

So far I have approached criticism in its parallel with historiography and the social aspect, now I propose a quick look at the presence of structuralism and its work in the face of criticism. There were many contributions that from the theories of Todorov, Barthes, Genette and Greimas were made to literary studies. In the first instance, he won in the methodological rigor and with him in the exhaustive way how stories, novels and poetry

were addressed. The proposals of structuralism run parallel to the great current of the "Boom" and at the bottom of the matter is the discussion. Great critics such as Emir Rodríguez Monegal, Antonio Cornejo Polar, Hugo Verani, among many, see criticism from their readers' knowledge and are a bit reluctant to accept structuralist theories or, better yet, stay away from that absence of conceptual language, as the critic Carlos Rincón rightly points out. Now, from the 1970s on, the need for information and reflection became the cornerstone of our literature. This communication is essential for the integration of the prevailing literary policies in the continent. The university is not on the verge of such concern.

I believe that what concerns us at the moment allows us to resume a dialogue on reading, literature and criticism. In this sense, the role of criticism can be summarized as follows:

1. Criticism fulfills a socializing function of the literary text. Its object: the work seeks readings from the most diverse possibilities of siege. This is a job that demands specialty. The present moments cannot explain and are not enough for that illusory universalism of the past years. In this aspect, criticism is assumed from the aforementioned studies and the constitution of schools of critical and theoretical thought.
2. The foregoing allows us to provide an answer to the previous generation of critics, which today has unfortunately been relegated to the background. The return to Rodríguez Monegal, Carlos Rincón, Verani, Promis, Goic, Ángel Rama, Cornejo Polar, Gutiérrez Girardot and Cobo Borda etc. is peremptory.
3. Literary criticism must be first of all literary, a subsidiary activity of knowledge.

## Reading Today

With regard to the task of reading today, it is a worrying topic for young people. Our generation is nourished by Boom writers, by the strong and obfuscating presence of Jorge Luis Borges, Kafka is read with the weight of supposed existentialism, Faulkner is traced to discover in him the traces he leaves in García Márquez. Unfortunately this is not the case today. The first concerns the publishing industry. Ernesto Sábato lamented the disappearance in Argentina of the Losada publishing house and did so at the inauguration of the reopening of this publishing house in Spain. Siglo XXI and Alianza Editorial barely show their books in Latin America. Argentine publishers are part of the old bookstores. Tiempo Contemporáneo, Fernando García Cambeiro, Cruz del Sur, Sudamericana are part of that nostalgic past. Laia, Bruguera and Aguilar in Spain are rarities of old collectors. We are facing an editorial crisis that we have admitted with an unworthy and dangerous way out: the photocopier. Readers are being trained with photocopy libraries. Wait a moment: I feel the answer from the virtual library. Yes, it is vital, important and it has made the world less wide and alien, but we must prepare ourselves so that our young people take on this challenge from reading, not from cutting and pasting. Regarding the above, Germán Espinosa in his article "Boceto para un evangelio del buen lector" makes an excellent reflection on reading and points out the following:

"Reading is a way of making ourselves contemporaneous with human beings of all times. Through it, you will be able to converse with men of recent years or of the most remote past. The good reader is a traveler and a citizen of time" (Espinosa, 2006, p. 19, author's translation). Indeed, the reading of his work makes us universal, the reading of *La ceiba de la memoria*, by Roberto Burgos Cantor; *Tamerlán*, by Enrique Serrano. But how far does a reader of farc-literature or sicairesque literature or prepagó literature go? This literature makes us ashamed.

I continue with the master, Germán Espinosa. He says: "Never stop reading a book because they have made a movie, a television series or some banal summary with it. Ordinarily, the original - the book in the totality of the pages - is superior and more entertaining" (2009, p. 19) Further on it says: "Remember that the great authors are not always the best sellers" Unfortunately this happens to us and as Oscar Wilde would say, that like beauty queens they parade down the catwalk of pedantry. The master, Rafael Gutiérrez Girardot would say, in this regard: "Well, studying is a passion, not a profession, a fortune and a risk, not a career, a fire, not a bureaucratic act, the challenge of freedom ... and the rest is given in addition, and in spades" (1989 , p. 283, author's translation). It is the passion that the teacher must awaken from his job as a counselor for a serious or seductive reading to acquire that book so many times persecuted.

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