



## MORAL EDUCATION THROUGH LITERATURE

*Nataša Pantić\**

University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh

*Abstract.* This paper examines a variety of perspectives on the role of literature in moral education. These proceed from general considerations to more specific issues that remain contested to the present day, such as distinction between individual and social morality. Others bring any literature under suspicion in the post-structuralist era, such as the cultural relativity of morality, distinctions between aesthetic and moral dimensions of literary works, and between moral awareness and behavior. The discussion is illustrated through considerations of the place of literature in English moral education from the Victorians to the present day. The discussion of dilemmas that policy makers and educators face today focuses on three dilemmas that often serve to question a possibility of justifying the morally educative power of literature: cultural relativism in literature and ideology (and its implications for the canon), the distinction between an aesthetic and moral power of literature, and finally, the doubts about the transferability of moral awareness acquired through literature to actual moral conduct.

*Key words:* moral education, literature, canon.

Civilization starts with the invention of letters which enabled communion with past generations. Flaubert's dictum *Read in order to live* suggests that books and literature can teach us something about ethics and the human condition in its intimate and universal aspects, as well as illustrate the follies and achievements of our own epoch.

For many centuries in the known Western world, the Bible was the book. The wisdom and moral instruction in the Old and New Testament was the sole template to measure one's life and account for life's troubles. With the discovery of printing, the wider role of literature in moral education was praised while, at the same time, respectable and invariably clerical opinion warned of its subversive nature. But there remained a consensus that in literature could be found answers on the best way, the moral way, to live one's life. Whether it is the confession of Lear asking Cordelia for forgiveness or the eventual maturity and self-awareness of Pip, or the struggles of Pierre and Mary in

\* E-mail: [natasa.pantic@gmail.com](mailto:natasa.pantic@gmail.com)

*War and Peace*, these 'old tales' are inseparable from the life and thought of their age. There is no doubt that these fictional lives have affected generations of readers and, because of their power, immediacy and beauty influenced many lives in a profoundly moral sense. But the French revolutionary Terror and twentieth century horrors challenged the notion that high culture and moral virtue are particularly linked. Today's cultural critics can certainly account with a wider range of offerees that contribute to creation of literary works and implication these forces have for shaping of morality, than could their counterparts in times when such creation was seen as a product of divine genius of their authors. Yet, it would indeed be very difficult to argue for denial, or ignore the role literary works play in shaping and cultivating our cultural, aesthetic and moral senses.

In this paper I will examine a variety of perspectives on the role of literature in moral education. These proceed from general considerations to more specific issues that remain contested to the present day, such as distinction between individual and social morality. Others bring any literature under suspicion in the post-structuralist era, such as the cultural relativity of morality, distinctions between aesthetic and moral dimensions of literary works, and between moral awareness and behavior. To illustrate the discussion, I will focus on the considerations of the place of literature in English moral 'education from the Victorians to the present day.

*The importance of literature for instilling virtue:  
Mathew Arnold's position*

It seems appropriate to start the account on literature in English moral education from Matthew Arnold, the nineteenth century writer and cultural critic, who was also an Inspector of Schools for around thirty years in late nineteenth century. Arnold's ethical and religious thinking represents an important turning point for the introduction of moral education from the private, religious sphere into public education. His contribution to the development of moral education through literature is relevant in three respects – his ethical idealism as the first move from religious absolutism to a humanistic scheme of morality that can be taught by literature, his concern to make true education a national matter, and his insistence on the formative nature of literature, particularly poetry and particularly classical literature.

In an attempt to give a comprehensive account on Matthew Arnold's ethical and religious position, Robbins (1959) uses a useful compilation of various interpretations by critics. These range from a characterization of Arnold's ethics as 'degeneration to moral anarchy' by T.S Eliot, to that of a

'prophetic vision of a new Christian faith' by critics in the wave of revived interest in Arnold's work since the 1920s. When they seek to define his position against the ideas of his own time, his critics note that Matthew Arnold rejected both a Catholic theology of metaphysical knowledge and Protestant literal inspiration. Yet, despite his appeals to observation and experience, his religion does not fall in line with the materialism of empirical science either. Arnold 'ignores the basis for empirical relativism and exalts the moral imperative into an absolute, the Eternal not ourselves.' At the same time, Arnold rejects 'the idea of moral absolute or law on the grounds that new situations and conditions arise which demand a fresh orientation even of moral attitudes', and advocates 'ethical idealism as a substitute for supernatural religion'. In attempts to define Arnold's ethics in positive terms, many commentators turn to more practical notions of 'ethical culture societies' and an emphasis on 'regenerative principles' in the transmission of culture which for Arnold is 'to know the best that has been thought and said in the world' (Robbins, 1959: 172-178).

Indeed, it would not be easy to claim much certainty over Arnolds' grasp of this moral imperative. Yet, what is undoubtedly clear is that it departs from the conception of morality as exclusively divinely inspired, and assumes the possibility of moral instruction in education – and in the public schools. Having investigated the educational systems in France, Germany and other European countries, Matthew Arnold often criticized English popular education for doing little 'to touch children's nature for good and to mould them' (Arnold, 1912: 271). He repeatedly emphasized in his reports on schools that 'men needed to be moralized'. This objective was best served through literature. And he gave primacy to letters over science. In his plea for the study of literature, Arnold particularly commended the humanizing power of poetry since it engaged feeling and imagination, and classical literature for valuing 'dignity and high spirits' and 'love of things of mind, the flexibility and spiritual moderation' (*Ibid.*, 184).

When we consider the reasons for Arnold's objection of moral absolutes, it seems understandable that the poet turned to great literature as a source of human aspiration for the highest ideals. This literature also dealt with the complexity of moral dilemmas set against the relativity of experience.

#### *T.S. Eliot's criticism*

Another voice that speaks of the power of literature in moral education is that of T. S. Eliot, although in a quite different context. Eliot criticized Arnold's agnostic attitude to the divine. He was against the attempt to replace religion

with a morality of cumulative human experience, in which Christianity was regarded merely as an imaginative myth of a moral quest of mankind.

In *Religion and Literature* (1932), Eliot criticizes liberal attitudes towards contemporary literature, which he characterized as 'corrupted by secularism'. The reasons Eliot gives for his concern about the effects of such literature on public morality, are exactly those that speak of his conviction of the great formative power of literary texts. He believed that reading about fictional characters behaving in a certain way with the approval of an author; we can be influenced to behave in the same way because our personality is 'invaded'<sup>7</sup> by the stronger personality of the author. However, the potency of this influence becomes less the more we read, as different authors (with different qualities) in turn take possession of our mind until finally we come to compare them and learn to read critically. Like Arnold, Eliot nevertheless considers the classics and English literature to be of vital importance in moral education (Eliot, 1932).

The faith in the morally educational role of literature persisted and underpinned national policies in Britain well into the twentieth century. With the spread of educational provision to the poorer classes, and need to unify the nation's sense of mission and identity in the aftermath of the First World War, the Newbolt Report in 1921 made the case for English literature as a more appropriate source for moral instruction, and less remote from life than the classics (Eagleton, 1983: 28). Since then, the position of English as a subject of most worth in children's moral and spiritual development remained unchallenged until the 1960s (Mathieson & McCulloch, 1995).

#### *From sixties to our time*

A number of influences, and causes led to a re-evaluation of the moral authority of literature. The horrors of the twentieth century brought to a definitive end the Enlightenment belief of constant, ever-upward, historical progress. In a 1963 essay, in a theme which has dominated his own and other's intellectual life, George Steiner noted:

Barbarism prevailed on the very ground of Christian humanism, of Renaissance culture and classic rationalism. We know that some of the men who devised and administered Auschwitz had been trained to read Shakespeare and Goethe, and continued to do so. This is of obvious and appalling relevance to the study or teaching of literature. It compels us to ask whether knowledge of the best that has been thought and said does, as Matthew Arnold asserted, broaden and refine the resources of the human spirit... Assumptions regarding the value of literate culture to the moral perception of

the individual and society were self-evident to Johnson, Coleridge and Arnold. They are now in doubt (Steiner, 1967).

It was not surprising that every aspect and value of western culture was scrutinized, re-evaluated and challenged.

Structuralism in Saussure's linguistics theory of arbitrary relation between a sign and referent; Marx's claim that the true significance of social processes went on 'behind the backs of individual agents'; Freud's interpretation of symbols in psychoanalysis, have all within their respective areas argued that apparent meanings are not necessarily the real ones. This had implications for the change in view of literature as account of real experiences to that of a 'structure' that can be read and described 'objectively', which structuralists see as the task of literary criticism (Eagleton, 1983: 108).

The post-structuralist theories of Jacques Derrida and Roland Barthes went further in critically regarding the 'meta-language' of criticism itself as a discourse that is a product of a particular 'construct' of reality. General suspicion towards the 'oppressive' power of any belief-system and its implications in linguistics, anthropology, sociology, philosophy and cultural studies, led to a new view of literary 'texts' as the products of various cultural forces. The creativity of their authors fell into the background. In 1980s and 1990s this view inspired strong reaction by cultural relativists to the Victorian liberals' claim to the morally educative power of literature, on grounds that literary tradition in schools was inhibiting working class pupils' motivation and success (Mathieson & McCulloch, 1995).

To the present day radical questioning of the role of literature in moral education remains a dominant tradition in the western philosophical thinking on moral values. It still affects numerous assessments and decisions for the place of literature in education in national curricula and cultural debate.

### *Personal and social morality*

Even when there seems to be an acknowledgment for literature's importance in moral education, there remains the important distinction between social and individual, personal morality.

Matthew Arnold diagnosed a problem. How to moralize the rising class and the coming mass State? How could the cultured elite influence the rest of the population? This was the problem of the 1940s while it was in germ (Robbins, 1959: 179). When Eliot criticized the professed aim of education to transmit culture, he warned that the culture defined as highest achievements of the past, was, in effect, only part of the culture that schools could transmit, if it was in harmony with outside influences of family, environment, news-

papers, or entertainment. 'The effective culture is that which is directing the activities of those who are manipulating that which they *call* culture' (Eliot, 1948: 107). He concludes that we could not and must not impose culture upon the young, even if we 'may impose upon them whatever political and social philosophy is in vogue'. In the political and social philosophy of western liberal democracy, the tension between the communitarian justifications for the 'substantial' values that are likely to be acceptable to all regardless of cultural differences, and the liberal opposition to coercion of individuals into any 'comprehensive theory of the good' remains unresolved in contemporary social, political and educational theory (Carr, 2005).

The dilemmas about universal and particular values will of course have more complex implications for moral education in general, and approach to the literature for moral purpose in modern, increasingly diverse classrooms, than they had in those of the Victorian era. Nevertheless, it is worth reminding ourselves that they are not the exclusive issues of our time. In 2 recent essay, *Room for the strange: what Victorians can teach us about education*, Dinah Birch (2005) describes the Victorians' anxieties about individuality and system that are not alien to our situation. On one hand, the nineteenth century was the age of the socializing spread of education advocated by school reformers such as Hannah More. Even though More declared her 'object is not to teach dogmas and opinions, but to form the lower classes to habits of industry and virtue' (which allowed no writing for the poor), her evangelical work was seen as leading to dangerous enthusiasm, because of the powerful, potentially seditious effects of reading.

However, the spread of education gradually gained favor as means to build a national sense of common purpose and discourage lawlessness and self-interest. At the same time, Romanticism valued individual 'inward' skeptical thinking and imagination, whether or not it was conducive to any collective good. Wordsworth, Blake, Shelley and Byron, questioned the restraints of school education for the purpose. Even Dickens, who propagated a large-scale comprehensive liberal education for the moral betterment of the nation, often expressed mistrust in the public education for fear it left little room for the 'strange' (Birch, 2005).

A look to the past as a point of reference is useful when we attempt to recognize our own assumptions. What has not changed is that the twenty first century has replicated the same controversies which featured in the nineteenth century, in particular the struggle for culture and ideals against the overwhelming forces of money and the acquisition of consumer prosperity. Today's education is comprehensively located in the public domain. We are aware that policies in education can only be discussed in relation to what we want in ge-

neral i.e. in relation to social, economic, financial, political spheres. There is no general agreement on the values to be promoted, more than to say that they should reflect principles of tolerance, diversity and justice that western liberal democracies adhere to. Our schools try to educate children from an astonishing diversity of cultural backgrounds, whose parents follow a variety of cultural traditions and religious conviction.

These facts leave us today with a wide range of possible agendas and complex dilemmas about the uses of literature. If we accept that there is place for it at all, then whose values and literature do we want to promote, how do we help children recognize the forces that work behind them, appreciate others' values and critically examine those of their own culture, and what does it mean to act morally in these confusing times? Education and the teaching of literature has become a political battleground in the culture wars. For many years, traditional critics have been scathing on the ways classic authors have been disappearing from the curriculum or downgraded. There seems to be widespread agreement on the need to develop children's ability to critically evaluate literature, but then is any interpretation as good as others?

Out of the broad array of dilemmas that policy makers and educators face today, I would like to consider three dilemmas that often serve to question any possibility of justifying the morally educative power of literature at all - cultural relativism in literature and ideology (and its implications for the canon), the distinction between an aesthetic and moral power of literature, and finally, the doubts about the transferability of moral awareness acquired through literature to actual moral conduct.

#### *Literature and ideology, the choice of canon*

For a school of cultural relativists, literature *is* an ideology by which the Victorian ruling classes tried to replace religion as a form of ideological control, just as structuralism was an attempt to replace it by science. The reason why literature was suitable for sweetening the pill of the late nineteenth century middle-class ideology is that, like religion, it deals with universal human values and works primarily by emotion. Thus, in the post-structuralist tradition, cultural relativists tie down canonical literature of particular periods (or interpretations of previous literature) to particular agendas of particular groups. Wilfred Owen was a victim of war and European nationalism. Different historical periods construct different Shakespeares and Homers for their own purposes (Eagleton, 1983).

When Arnold wrote that literature was an enemy to ideological dogma, he had his own beliefs, which (like everyone else) he regarded as reasoned

positions rather than ideological dogmas. Do cultural relativists, then, do the same when they argue that all writing is indeterminate and attempt to judge it in terms of its presumed social value?

In his highly enjoyable and witty polemic, *Culture of Complaint* (1993) the Australian critic Robert Hughes writes about some implications of the all-pervasiveness of politics and 'correctness' in the canon debate in the United States. The critics of Eurocentrism see the canon as a list of books by 'dead Europeans' – Shakespeare, Dante, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Stendhal, Donne – that are bound to implant a permanent bias towards other cultures. In their extreme utterances they claim that Homer as a 'dead white male' could not possibly have anything to say to a 'live black female' (Hughes, 1993: 98). Hughes strongly positions himself against such reduction of judgments of literary works to political terms giving several convincing arguments.

Firstly, literature is one of the means by which the young (and the old) discover the line beyond which politics may not go, which for him is one of the first conditions of freedom. Secondly, he points to the injustice of accusing 'dead white male' authors of 'lack of conformity to the current fashions in oppression studies' (*Ibid.*, 98-99). Thirdly, the criticism is based on an oversimplifying assumption that we necessarily become what we read, or in his words: 'Imbibe the *Republic* or *Phaedo* at nineteen and you will be one kind of person; study *Jane Eyre* or *Mrs Dalloway* or the poetry of Aphra Behn, and you will be another' (*Ibid.*, 90). Finally, he suggests that we cannot see other cultures well, until through knowing our own we 'reach a point where inclusiveness means something'. Otherwise we are left with 'mere indecisive mush.'

Similarly, the late Allan Bloom (1987) was concerned that the modern belief in openness to all kinds of ideologies, without any notion of right and wrong against which we judge our own and other cultures, could mean the end of 'the real motive for education as the search for a good life' (Bloom, 1987: 34). Bloom argues that openness conceived on accepting everything and denying any objective measure has been rendered meaningless and even destructive to both 'one's own and the good' (*Ibid.*, 38). In his view, study of different cultures did not inspire young Americans' genuine knowledge and interest in those cultures. They 'learned to doubt beliefs even before they believed in anything' (*Ibid.*, 42). In the field of literature, he nostalgically remarks that today's students are deprived of anything like Dickens' characters to allow them to modify their distinctions of human types.

One only needs to think of all the great writers whose dismissal could be argued as they failed to contribute to our betterment because they lived in a sexist age, showed no care for community, were snobbish or depressive, or



unkind to their wives. It seems less harmful to dismiss the cultural relativism instead, and embrace its criticism, for a simple reason which could be nicely summed up by Robert Hughes' illustration:

The *Odyssey* can't mean exactly the same things to us that it meant to a reader in first-century Alexandria, or to one in seventeenth-century France. But it continues to *mean*, to irradiate the mind of the willing and receptive reader with the vast light of imaginative possibility (Hughes, 1993: 96).

#### *Aesthetics and the didactic in literature*

When literature is denied a role in moral education, it is sometimes argued on the grounds that use of literary Works for the interpretation of moral behavior of protagonists, dissipates their aesthetic integrity and reduces them to lessons in moral and social problems.

Stronger roots of this thinking can be found in the Russian formalism of the 1920s which advocates study of literary texts as workings of the particular organization of language, rather than as objects of an author's mind. For them *Animal Farm* is not about Stalinism, Stalinism only inspired it (Eagleton, 1983: 8). More recently Hugh M. Curtler wrote about an artistic failure of *Crime and Punishment* in its epilogue, since in it Dostoevsky 'abandons the poetry' to make a philosophic statement about the idea of human freedom. 'This', he thinks 'is not art; it is didactic baggage' (Curtler, 2004: 4). Michael Oakshott believed that it would be misleading to regard works of literature 'as ' contributions to an inquiry into the nature of the real world' and therefore sources of 'a special kind of moral education'. For him 'aesthetic experience' is a unique kind of human experience that absolutely resists reduction to any other than aesthetic terms. The exclusive purpose of creating and enjoying the works of art is the 'delight' that they give us (cited in Williams, 2002: 165-168).

It is interesting to compare this view to T.S. Eliot's call for closer scrutiny of popular literature because it is exactly our reading for pleasure or 'aesthetic enjoyment' that may have the greatest and least suspected effect on us 'as entire human beings' (Eliot, 1932: 396). Although Eliot believed that whether something is literature or not can only be determined by literary standards, he did not find those standards sufficient for determining the 'greatness' of a piece of literature (*Ibid.*, 388). His belief in the moral power of literary works in affecting, albeit mostly negatively, our whole being, was so strong, as to claim that no book was harmless – with the exception of ones 'so utterly unreadable as to be incapable of injuring anybody' (*Ibid.*, 393).

Here, it seems plausible to look for a happy medium between such strong stands in such an ambiguous area as literature. When we think of great

works of literature in aesthetic terms and the 'delight' they give us, and creations of characters that indeed seem to slip out of control of their creator and live a life of their own, it does seem important to keep ourselves attuned to both possible messages and the way they are brought across within an integrated literary work including its poetic and aesthetic power. If we consider the poetic strength of the opening chapters of *Paradise Lost* compared to the final passages, to believe that Milton intended Satan to be more alive and convincing than God, would be inconsistent with what we know about the poet's religious faith.

Yet, to deny any moralizing role to literature on aesthetic grounds is too extreme. When Williams (2002) challenges Oakeshott's theory (which he calls 'aesthetic separatism' since it tends to separate literature from life and the cognitive from the affective aspects of 'aesthetic experience'), he makes several important points. Firstly, Williams wonders how would it be possible for us to 'entertain the artistic expression of emotions, thoughts and ideas' without reference to the practical life from which they were construed. Secondly, he reminds us of many examples of authors who explicitly set out to teach us something when they embark on their creation. They do want to move us, to / change our viewpoint. George Orwell would probably be surprised to learn that he did not want to tell us something about totalitarianism in his famous satire. Thirdly, and critically, Williams notes that 'affirming a relationship between literature and life is not to be committed to a didactic view of literature' (Williams 2002: 168-170). It seems more reasonable to use the aesthetic arguments when discussing appropriate pedagogies for sensitizing children to the complexity of literary works, than to attempt to question the educative power of perhaps the most directly speaking form of art.

### *Thinking and acting morally*

If we accept the role of literature in moral education, there is a question of whether it can serve as more than a reference point for moral awareness, and whether and how it can contribute to shaping moral behavior, as well as thinking. It is important to take a closer look at theories on how we receive literature, which is relevant for our learning from it and acting upon it. In doing so, I will look at the implications of the affective and cognitive processes involved.

The contemporary ideas of 'aesthetic experience' and unique nature of the 'artifact' come from the modern philosophy of art in the work of Kant, Hegel, Schiller, Coleridge and others (Eagleton, 1983). The pre-romantic idea that values in art are in the accuracy with which it represents reality was first

abandoned with Kant's critique on judgment of art as autonomous, independent of our moral or scientific reasoning. In this tradition, emotions and feelings involved in 'aesthetic experience' are distanced from our moral development. In the same vein, the dominant ethical theories of our time, such as Kohlberg's theory of moral development, see our morality primarily as a cognitive process, to which emotions involved with an appreciation of literature, could have little to contribute. On the other hand, the theories that criticize this cognitive developmental tradition, such as Lickona's 'character education' or the care ethics of Gilligan and Noddings, attempt to reclaim the place for emotional dimensions of moral learning and behavior. It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the implications and drawbacks of these theories in the field of moral instruction. Yet it is clear that in order to argue for the effective moral use of literature, one would need to make an assumption that both reason and emotion play a role in shaping our moral understanding and disposition to act. Some reconciliation can be found in the 'virtue ethics' theory which follows Aristotelian tradition of moral virtue as 'rational ordering of emotions' (Carr, 2005).

For Binnendyk & Schonert-Reichl (2002) characters from Harry Potter represent particular stages in Kohlberg's model of moral reasoning. When they recommend classroom discussions of moral dilemmas, they point out that it is important for teachers to recognize their compatibility with the appropriate stage of moral reasoning. However, recommending Harry Potter characters as an influential source for fostering children's moral development in the first place is due to the fact that these stories have a hold on the imagination of millions of children who identify with Harry Potter as their hero. This certainly speaks in favor of the critical importance of an appeal to children's feelings and imagination, which character educators stress when they recommend in moral education use of 'role models' from the Harry Potter and other stories which involve the struggle of good and evil, and moral obligations (Bom *et al.*, 2002).

There is also an argument that our awareness that all the literature is fictional undermines its capacity to affect our moral thinking and actions. This argument seems to be of little effect with young children, at least to those of us who have often seen them scream in the theatre to warn their heroes of the danger behind their back. Of course, older readers' capacity for empathy and sympathy with fictional characters is not as direct and their affective and cognitive processes interplay in more complex ways. Nevertheless, Dinah Birch (2005) reminds us that school-day heroes can stay in our memory for life and we revisit them, like Scrooge revisits Ali Baba and Robinson Crusoe during his moral reincarnation. Others, of course, fail to hold our imagination

even while we read them. To return to relativism, this seems to depend so much more on the genius and quality of their creator than on their cultural background. It could be true, as moral developmentalists say, that notions of right and wrong which we have even before we read were rationally acquired, but the devil *is* in the detail. Moral dilemmas of most literary heroes are not between right and wrong, except perhaps in the children's moral tales. Most literature deals/with wrong/wrong or right/right kind of dilemmas (Carr, undated).

#### *Summary and conclusions*

This paper set out to consider uses of literature in moral education in the context of English education from the nineteenth century to the present day. The overview of perceptions proceeded from strong Victorian convictions of educative power of literature that granted it an important place in moral education through most of the twentieth century, to the more critical views in the contemporary western philosophical, social, and educational theories and practices.

In this later context, the paper considered several problematic areas in which arguments range from those arguing for a radical dismissal of the power or the appropriateness of using literature as a source for moral instruction, to more moderate stances.

(1) The questioning of literature on the grounds of relativism of social and cultural values it represents, was rejected in favor of the claim that universal human values in the greatest literature continue to speak to us.

(2) The importance of distinguishing between an aesthetic dimension and the moral messages in literature was acknowledged, yet not accepted as a valid reason for denial of any moral force in literature.

(3) Despite the difficulties with recognition and explanation of the workings of cognitive and affective processes in the human reception of literature, its potential to shape our moral awareness and acting was admitted.

In conclusion, many issues raised by the modern critical voices deserve due attention in a pedagogy of moral education through literature in an attempt to better understand and appreciate the philosophies of authors of different times, backgrounds and forms of expression. We are unlikely to share Matthew Arnold's enthusiasm about the power of literature to affect us almost as a cure, but we can and should examine the interplay of universal human conditions and particular social, political, and cultural circumstances. The fact that they are complex does not seem to be a justifiable ground for the dismissal of a role for literature in moral education. Undeniably, like Arnold

himself, great writers transcend the horizons of their own time, and their messages and the beauty of their art remains relevant beyond particular circumstances.

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Наташа Пантић  
 МОРАЛНО ОБРАЗОВАЊЕ КРОЗ КЊИЖЕВНОСТ  
*Анстракт*

У овом раду се улога књижевности у моралном образовању посматра из различитих углова. Полази се од општих разматрања и иде ка конкретнијим питањима о којима се дебата води до данашњег дана, као што је на пример питање разлике између индивидуалног и друштвеног морала. Неки аутори оспоравају моралну улогу било ког књижевног дела из пост-структуралистичке ере, а за то аргументе налазе у културној релативности морала, дистинкцији између естетских и моралних димензија књижевних дела, и између моралне свести и понашања. Расправа је илустрована разматрањима о месту књижевности у енглеском моралном образовању од викторијанског периода до данашњег дана. Рас-

права о дилемама са којима су суочени људи који се баве образовањем фокусира се на три дилеме којима се често доводи у питање могућност оправдања морално образовне снаге књижевности: културни релативизам у књижевности и идеологији (и његове импликације за канон), дистинкција између естетске и моралне снаге књижевности и напослетку, сумње у преносивост моралне свести стечене читањем књижевних дела до стварног моралног понашања.

*Кључне речи:* морално образовање, књижевност, канон.

Наташа Пантић  
НРАВСТВЕННОЕ ОБРАЗОВАНИЕ  
В КОНТЕКСТЕ ХУДОЖЕСТВЕННОЙ ЛИТЕРАТУРЫ

*Резюме*

Роль художественной литературы в нравственном образовании рассматривается в данной работе в самых разных аспектах. Начинается с общих взглядов, затем рассматриваются более конкретные вопросы, являющиеся предметом до сих пор не законченной дискуссии. Одна из таких дискуссионных проблем – это проблема установления разницы между индивидуальной и общественной нравственностью. Некоторые авторы оспаривают нравственную роль любого произведения художественной литературы из эпохи постструктурализма, а в качестве аргументов приводят культурную относительность морали, несоответствие эстетических и нравственных составляющих литературного произведения, несовпадение нравственного сознания и поведения. В качестве иллюстративных примеров приводится роль художественной литературы в английском нравственном воспитании от викторианских времен до наших дней. Дискуссия фокусируется на явлениях, отрицающих силу художественной литературы как средства нравственного образования: культурный релятивизм в литературе и идеологии (и его канонические импликации), дистинкция между эстетической и нравственной силой произведений художественной литературы, сомнение в возможности переноса морального сознания, приобретенного при чтении художественной литературы на реальное нравственное поведение.

*Ключевые слова:* нравственное образование, художественная литература, канон.