

The multi-faceted profile of postmodernism, under the umbrella of a complex and contradictory postmodernity (Sharman 2006: XI), attracts a softened approach to conceiving the canon. In such conditions, there are no solid, impenetrable frontiers between stylistic and cultural phenomena. Zygmunt Bauman contested the cultural dams built by high modernism. For him, modernity was a process of liquefaction from the start. If solids cancel time, liquids, on the contrary, boost time perception (Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, 2000: 2). Mainstream canon is thus overflowed by tributaries which melt the “solids” (ibidem: 4). Building up the canon could be fuelled up by liquefaction or, oppositely, could be pulverized into countless petty, irrelevant selection criteria. Even Bauman warned about the decomposing blabbering of culture industry. The “exhilarating freedom to pursue anything” and the “mindboggling uncertainty” as to what is worthwhile pursuing induce a state of “all-deriding, all-eroding, all-dissolving destructiveness” (Bauman, *Intimations of Postmodernity*, 1992: VII-IX). The key word here is “all”. Without it, we could consider the creative destruction’s utility, as it dismembers fossilized structures and invites to a more flexible reassembling.

Liquefying structures may help the process of canonization as much as they may break it into countless exchanges of insignificant content. Too much freedom to pursue anything in a society enjoying destructiveness leads to axiological confusion. This abyss of relativism engenders irony as defence in front of confused axiology.

Judith Butler, on the other hand, is a fierce defender of the right to be different, of the Other and Otherness. The postmodern canon would satisfy the condition of alterity. But she also admits that we need common codes as a condition of recognition (Butler, 2000: 272). Recognition is lucrative as long as there is mutual endeavour in approaching differences in terms of possible points of convergence. The canon rejuvenates when it accepts various points of view, as a regenerating parallax. It depends a lot wherefrom one watches phenomena, inasmuch as the parallax does not eschew understanding and comprehension.

What for Bauman was destructive postmodernity, for Stuart Sim became scepticism towards tradition. Such an antifoundational approach to canon is specific to the Western tradition (Sim 2001: 3). Intrinsically, postmodernism returns to Sextus Empiricus’ suspension of judgment and favours an empirical approach. Discriminating approximations are countered in this way. Sim also contends (ibidem: 5) that Jacques Derrida’s deconstruction took issue with the system-building side of structuralism and the implementation of hegemony.

There is an unbridgeable gap between the structuralist and the poststructuralist ways of conceiving of the canon. Basically, historical modernism passes away the moment structuralism is dethroned. At the end of postmodernism, however, we should be able to accept uncertainty and difference. The modernist experience, nevertheless, is a guarantee against the too easy skidding to relativism. The lack of meaning can be as dangerous as imposed meanings. The canon is a dam containing fleeting aesthetic phenomena and it looks like it suffers and assumes a new functionality. Canonicity implies more and more preservation and less domination and exemplarity. Assuredly, preservation does not mean museumification, as it offers the benefits of a database. The canon is a gene pool, memory and stem cells at the same time, concentration and reformulation. That is why cultures need creative destruction: without it, canonizing would be a matter of recycling.

As we know, post-industrial society overlaps both modernity and postmodernity. Two context built on derived oppositions: polar oppositions versus perpetual transformation, depoliticised view of organizations versus politicised view of organizations, theory based on market and economic assumptions versus theory based on linguistic assumptions, universal theorizing versus diversity/local theorizing.

Even the “post” paradigm recorded critical transformations in the way the selection of values was accomplished. Brian McHale (*Constructing Postmodernism*, 1992) opposed hierarchy to anarchy and presence to indeterminacy. This was the momentum of avant-garde as the vein of anti-creation became apparent.

Some of the oppositions between modernism and postmodernism, as they were described by Ihab Hassan in the *Postmodern Turn* are responsible for the new “turns” which influenced the reorganization of the canon. A whole series of oppositions is made obvious: form (conjunctive, closed) is pitted against antiform (disjunctive, open), purpose against play, design against chance, hierarchy against anarchy, art against object, finished work against process, performance against happening, distance against participation, synthesis against antithesis, presence against absence, centre against dispersal, text against intertext, paradigm against syntagm, metaphor against metonymy, selection against combination, rhizome against surface, signified against signifier, narrative/Grande Histoire against anti-narrative/Petite Histoire, paranoia against schizophrenia, metaphysics against irony, transcendence against immanence. It is transparent that some of these traits are resumed under slightly different denominations. But, more important, if we compare the former traits (modernism) with the

latter ones (postmodernism), we cannot ignore some questions about canonicity. Definitely, there is overlapping and continuity between modernism and postmodernism, but some radical differences imply different selection criteria. It follows that the most comprehensive modernist canon will have some common points with the most comprehensive postmodernist canon, but also a lot of discontinuities. The modernist canon relies heavily on order, respect, aestheticism and carefully selected meanings. It is an elitist canon. The postmodernist one is more relaxed, loquacious, heteroclit, and more preoccupied with ideologies. That is why the modernist canon will favour sophisticated and non-commercial experiments (a massive platoon of avant-gardist artists belong here), whereas the postmodernist canon will retain lighter experiments, with a lesser degree of codification.