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REFLECTIONS ON THEORY AND CRITICISM OF THE 'LITERARY EGO'. A COMPARATIVE STUDY

Abstract: *The purpose of this essay is to deepen philosophical and critical issues related to the 'literary Ego' by articulating the conceptual and theoretical premises of a contemporary corpus. To date, the subject of my study lacks a relative critical literature which is epistemologically developed starting from the philosophical component. In the essay, a thematic reading of the materials relating to the literary subject was actualised, which led to the development of an equally comparative-formal and theoretical-literary discourse. What has been deduced is a character of profound interconnection between the insights offered by reading the essence of the 'literary Ego' as an empirical and phenomenological res. In conclusion, an attempt was made to highlight the concreteness of this character, which offers the starting point for further studies.*

Key words: *Ego, subject, literary, phenomenology, theory, comparative, literature.*

1. Introduction

This essay is based on the articulation of philosophical conceptual premises related to the 'literary subject' stated in the philosophical discourse of the twentieth century. Through the specific consideration of the ontological dynamics related to the internal Ego of the literary work, it will be my intention to highlight some of its existential characteristics. At the basis of this critical operation lies the necessity to bridge the present absence of a relative discussion, properly focused on the philosophical component of the matter. This absence has indeed lead my choice to proceed with the operation of a thematic reading of some of the major contemporary philosophical formulations concerning the issue and, subsequently, to proceed in the direction of the comparison of them. The identification of theoretical continuity points, and the consequent connection of them with materials of the literary canon, has allowed me to develop the essay in an equally comparative-formal and theoretical-literary epistemological direction. The transnational perspective

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adopted in the reading has in fact made it possible to conduct my discourse on a theoretical level, within which an attempt has been made to systematise the matters relating to the literary subject in an organic sense. The essay, therefore, started from the study of Sartian theoresis, that focuses on the philosopher's premise relating to the phenomenological substance of the literary Ego.

NOTE: The drafting of the essay was accomplished in a situation of personal difficulty in finding critical and literary materials in their original editions. In cases where this was impossible for me, I quoted from the Italian editions at my disposal. The English translations of the critical texts consulted in Italian were therefore made by me. In the notes, following the entry "Original text", I have quoted the texts in Italian.

2. The literary subject as phenomenological res

In *La trascendenza dell'ego* Jean-Paul Sartre reflects on a question of fundamental significance in the context of contemporary phenomenological discourse. In the perspective of the French philosopher, the essence of the *Ego*[2] coincides with that of *res*, of an object, existing regardless of singular consciousness. According to the reading of the philosopher Rocco Ronchi: "Like any other in the world, the ego [for Sartre] is a transcendent object that consciousness self-perceiving reflexively places in front of itself "[3] (2011: 79)[4]. If considered on a literary-critical level, the implications of this concept are enormously significant. In fact, it permits you to read the relationship that is established between the extratextual Ego of a reading-subject and the textual Ego of an object-read in a dimension of horizontality, as elements of the same existential plane. Sartrian thought establishes a principle that identifies the Ego as an object-between-objects, as *res*, placed by consciousness as

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[2] The definition of the term is offered by the philosopher at the beginning of the second chapter of the same essay, *La costituzione dell'Ego*: "The Ego is the unity of states and actions - optionally of qualities. It is a unity of transcendent units and it is transcendent itself " (2011: 582). Original text: "L'Ego è l'unità degli stati e delle azioni - facoltativamente delle qualità. È un'unità di unità trascendenti ed è trascendente esso stesso".

[3] Original text: "Come qualsiasi altro esistente al mondo, l'io [per Sartre] è un oggetto trascendente che la coscienza autopercependosi riflessivamente pone di fronte a sé".

[4] Sartre: "The Me should not be sought in or behind states of consciousness. The Me appears only with the reflexive act and as a noematic correlate of a reflexive intention. We begin to glimpse that the I and the Me are the same" (2011: 553). Original text: "Il Me non deve essere cercato *negli* stati di coscienza né *dietro* ad essi. Il Me appare soltanto con l'atto riflessivo e come correlato noematico di un'intenzione riflessiva. Cominciamo a intravedere che l'io e il Me sono il medesimo".

the term of a reflective relationship. The "essential principle of phenomenology"[5] according to which "every conscience is consciousness *of* something" (Sartre 2011: 417), would therefore not be indicative of a belonging of the thinking Ego to the thought Me, but precisely of the division between these two terms:

> Thus, the conscience that says "I think" is not speaking properly what it thinks. Or rather, it is not his thought that it poses through this thetic act. We are therefore authorised to ask ourselves if the Ego that thinks is common to the two superimposed consciousnesses or if it is not rather that of the reflected consciousness. Each reflective consciousness is in itself unreflected and a new third-degree act is needed to place it. [...] It simply does not place itself as its object. Wouldn't it then be the reflexive act that would give birth to the Me in the reflected consciousness?[6]

Ronchi states that the Me is revealed by this fracture as "any 'thing' in the world, accessible to the intuition of the other as to my intuition, as an object [...] like any object of the world"[7] (2011: 65). Orienting this philosophical perspective to the consideration of the literary subject's Ego, it shows in these terms the ontological dissociation that divides it from its creator: not as a simple aesthetic product, but as its own and finite subjective singularity. The literary subject is indeed part of a poetic-formal construction, but it is equally complete-in-itself for the same attributes that Sartre highlights in his reflection on phenomenological subjectivity. If the Ego of the poet is a '*res*-tra-*res*', an object between objects, the 'poetised' Ego is no different: it is an object of the artist's *cogito* – the artist's consciousness – and, as an object of his consciousness, it is an existing object, therefore distinct from the consciousness.

If considered as an epistemological assumption in the context of a critical-literary analysis, the Sartrian consideration allows the reading of the phenomenology relating to literary subjects in a completely horizontal perspective. By showing – indirectly – the phenomenologically 'concrete' character of the literary subjects, protagonists of the critical analysis, Sarte's philosophical thought involves a

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[5] Original text: "Il principio essenziale della fenomenologia, «ogni coscienza è coscienza *di* qualcosa»".

[6] Original text: "Così la coscienza che dice «Io penso» non è a parlare propriamente quella che pensa. O piuttosto non è il suo pensiero che essa pone attraverso questo atto tetico. Siamo dunque autorizzati a domandarci se l'Io che pensa è comune alle due coscienze sovrapposte o se non è piuttosto quello della coscienza riflessa. Ogni coscienza riflettente è infatti in sé stessa irriflessa e occorre un atto nuovo di terzo grado per porla. [...] Semplicemente non si pone a sé stessa come il suo oggetto. Non sarebbe allora proprio l'atto riflessivo che farebbe nascere il Me nella coscienza riflessa?".

[7] Original text: "una qualsiasi 'cosa' del mondo, accessibile all'intuizione dell'altro come alla mia, come oggetto [...] al pari di qualsiasi oggetto del mondo".

principle of concreteness that also regards comparative and speculative connections. Therefore, this principle also relates to the phenomenological concreteness of critical interconnection and rests its basis on a broader philosophical conception formulated by various intellectuals over the Twentieth Century. About this, I quote Carlo Michelstaedter's reading from the second paragraph of *The Persuasion and the Rhetoric*: "Life is an infinite correlativity of consciences"[8] (1982: 45). Based on the Parmenidean notion that every living object has its own self-persuasion of 'being life', Michelstaedter formulates a phenomenological theory which, like Sartrian theory, identifies the root of the existence of the object in its being-object of a conscience: "Nothing is *per se*, but in regards to a consciousness"[9] (1982:45). If the literary subject *is* – exists – concretely as an object of an extratextual conscience[10], and if we consider life in terms of ubiquitous correlation of consciences, then the connections between literary subjects established in critical thinking do not concern an aesthetic abstraction, but a phenomenological process. In other words, rather than a purely formal discourse, the associations/dissociations of literary critical thinking take on the meaning – and value – of a discourse on what is purely existent, which is *res*.

3. The conditions of existence of the literary subject

The epistemological gap that, as has been said, divides the two connotations of the critical analysis referring to the literary Ego – the aesthetic-formal one from the phenomenological one – poses a question that regards the consideration of it in a broad sense. About this, I quote the following Pasolinian verses from *Le ceneri di Gramsci*:

Lo scandalo del contraddirmi, dell'essere

con te e contro te; con te nel cuore,

in luce, contro te nelle buie viscere;[11] (Pasolini 2001: 21)

The Ego offers the spontaneous confession of a feeling of inner laceration, of logical and emotional awareness of the incommunicability that separates one's identity

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[8] Original text: "La vita è un'infinita correlatività di coscienze".

[9] Original text: "Nessuna cosa è per sé, ma in riguardo a una coscienza".

[10] It is intended to refer, with this term, to a subject unrelated to the internal-literary dimension, therefore placed outside of it as the spectator is placed outside the internal dimension of the artistic object.

[11] Translation by Michelle Cliff: "The shame of contradicting myself, of being / with you and against you; with you in my heart, / in truth, against you in my dark inmost feelings;" (2005: 26).

from contemporary historical reality. It is emphasised by Roberto Calasso (2010: 192), who identifies in these verses precisely a subjective desire to recover a "natural" and "biological" dimension of life, an ontologically opposite dimension to that outlined by Antonio Gramsci and Giovanni Gentile in the concept of identification between 'life' and 'history'. Calasso writes:

> Although an expression itself of a secular historical event, this "craving", "animal", "corporeal" life, with which the poet [Pasolini] identifies himself in his own flesh, is now situated on the outer edge of history, in an indistinct and chaotic anthropic flap, devoid of any formal characterization – not 'life form', but, in the literal sense of the term, stripped life, completely coinciding with its bare presence.[12] (2010: 193).

To manifest itself in Pasolini's verses is therefore not the reflection of a logical consideration established *a priori*, but the emotional *quid* of the subjectivity of the literary Ego. The phenomenological authenticity of Pasolini's laceration acquires the concrete weight of an existing *res*, which however is not a "life form" and which remains "devoid of any formal characterisation". Giorgio Agamben writes in *L'uso dei corpi*: "By the term life-form, we mean a life that can never be separated from its form, a life in which it is never possible to isolate and keep something like bare life apart"[13] (2014: 264). So, if we learn from Sartre that the Pasolini literary Ego is authentically existing, and that it is authentically existent as a consequence of this, the emotional expression of its historical dissociation, it is not however the existence of a life form. This leads to a paradoxical point: the need in the literary critical context to consider the subject of the work as an entity, yet an entity unhinged by the category of the form of life. Entity that lacks a *bare life* and a *bare form*, but not the *given form* by the poet at the time of composition. In fact, we can know the *given form* of Pasolini's poetic expression, we can articulate the considerations of a specific critical reading about it, but we cannot proceed into reading it as an authentic life form. The literary subject thus appears as a paradoxical entity, which sums up the perennial offering itself to the gaze of the other, remaining perpetually extrinsic

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[12] Original text: "Per quanto espressione essa stessa di una secolare vicenda storica, questa vita «smaniosa», «animale», «corporea», con la quale il poeta s'identifica nella sua medesima carne, si situa ormai sul margine esterno della storia, in una falda antropica indistinta e caotica, priva di qualsiasi caratterizzazione formale – non 'forma di vita', ma, nel senso letterale del termine, vita spogliata, del tutto coincidente con la sua nuda presenza".

[13] Original text: "Con il termine forma-di-vita, intendiamo una vita che non può mai essere separata dalla sua forma, una vita in cui non è mai possibile isolare e tenere disgiunto qualcosa come la nuda vita".

to biological tangency. Regarding this, it is useful to quote the following passage by Jean-Luc Nancy regarding the character of authentic *sacredness* of the image:

> It could be said that the image is always sacred, if we want to continue using this term which is easy to misunderstand, but which I will use temporarily as a regulatory idea to set my thought in motion. In fact, "sacred" is often confused with "religious". But religion is the observance of a ritual that forms and maintains a bond [...]. Sacred means separated, remote, isolated, withdrawn.[14] (2002: 33)

The separation of the image, its "putting itself away from the rest", consists of an ontological attribute impossible to prescind. It is imperative, in Nancy's perspective, that the image is "different from the thing", "that it is detached, put out and before the eyes" (2002: 34). In the same way, the distance between the literary Ego and Ego of the reading-subject becomes essential. In being in front of a work of art we can see the empirical separation that distances us from it: the picture is *materially* different from us, it is made of canvas and colours. The same phenomenon is related to the literary Ego: while remaining extraneous to the component-material connotation of the artistic image, it remains separate from our consciousness as *res*-in-itself – in line with Sartre's philosophical conception. The literary Ego is always observable, it can always be placed as an object of critical reading, but precisely for this reason it is always an object ontologically – as well as phenomenologically – distinct. And in its distinction, therefore, always cut off from the ontological dimension of the animal and biological form-of-life. A useful point of view to deepen the terms of this relation is offered by the reading that Greg Garrand in *Ecocriticism* provides about what he defines as 'heideggerrian ecophilosophy': "[fo Heidegger] To 'be' is not just to exist, but to 'show up' or be disclosed, which requires human consciousness as the space, or 'clearing' (*Lichtung*), in and through which it is disclosed [...]" (2012: 34). Once again, the existing object is distinct from the living object, yet it is described as real in its essence of being.

> In meditation upon the poetic world, however, we discover that "language is the house of Being in which man ek-sists by dwelling" (Heidegger 1993: 237), and Heidegger claims that the essence of beings, their autonomy and resistance to our purposes, is disclosed by a similarly resistant language. Through poetry,

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[14] Original text: "Si potrebbe dire che l'immagine è sempre sacra, se vogliamo continuare a usare questo termine che si presta a malintesi, ma che userò provvisoriamente come un'idea regolatrice per mettere in movimento il pensiero. "Sacro", infatti, viene spesso confuso con "religioso". Ma la religione è l'osservanza di un rito che forma e mantiene un legame [...]. Sacro significa separato, messo a distanza, appartato, ritirato".

then, we learn that "Man is not the lord of beings. Man is the shepherd of Being" (1993: 245). (Garrand 2012: 35)

The writing-subject is therefore not in the position of dominating the existing literary object, but of steering it. It is in fact empirical *res*, which *is* as such, 'despite' the author, and that resist to the outer "purposes".

In summary, the literary Ego is an existing object, distinct from the writing-subject as the second term of a reflective relationship, but it's not a form-of-life as the writing-subject is. It is ontologically unattainable[15] but, as object, it is always critically observable and always autonomous.

4. The space of identity

The abandonment of the purely aesthetic-formal study perspective on the literary ego in favour of a phenomenological one, has therefore highlighted some cardinal attributes. The identification of these allows, in the context of the in-depth analysis of the issue, to outline an epistemological basis from which to start in establishing a critical discourse. I quote from the *First* of *Lyric fragments* by Clemente Rebora:

> Perde, chi scruta,
> l'irrevocabil presente;
> né i melliflui abbandoni
> né l'oblïoso incanto
> dell'ora il ferreo battito concede.
> E quando per cingerti io balzo
> – sirena del tempo –
> un morso appena e una ciocca ho di te:
> o non ghermita fuggi, e senza grido
> nel pensiero ti uccido
> e nell'atto mi annego.[16] (2018: 173)

The literary subject alternates here the direction of his reflective gaze: from the general of existence to the particular of the singular experience. His initial statement regards human life in a broad sense and, in particular, the condemnation of the

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[15] This word is used in reference to the already described impossibility for a subject external to the literary object to reach a state of conjunction with its ontological dimension.

[16] Translation by me: "Loses, whoever stares, / into the irrevocable present; / nor the mellifluous abandonments / nor the oblivious charm / of the hour the iron beating does grant. / And when to grab you I jump - siren of time - / just one bite and one lock of you I have: / oh not seized you flee, and without scream / into the thought I kill you / and into the act I drown myself."

'loss of the present' for those who spend time in a non-participatory attitude. The sentence is closely related to the author's Ego: the figure of her, "siren of time", flees hopelessly, leaving the subject in possession of an ephemeral trace ("just one bite and one lock") in a despair "without cry". The final two lines admit the reader to the singular dimension of the ontological dualism in which he perceives to be confined: the *thought* on the one hand, the *act* on the other. In Rebora's poem the centrality of the literary subject is absolute. His *Lyrical fragments* are in fact a concrete example of what Guido Mazzoni defines as «one of three great theoretical genres in which literature is divided, the one that brings together the texts where an ego exhibits, in a style far from the zero degree of prose, a style of highly subjective contents: passions, moods, personal reflections»[17] (2005: 43). The reflective projection of the literary Ego is therefore oriented by the writing-subject to the admission of the reading-subject into a purely emotional space. The emotive load that the Ego of the *Lyric fragment* expresses thus contributes to the definition of its own identity in the eyes of the reader: an Ego that suffers from a specific absence. Even the initial logical consideration, "Loses, whoever stares / into the irrevocable present", a *general* meditation on existence, is characterised by its *singular* state of suffering. Considering it on an ontological level, the Ego written by Rebora is one with its suffering, as it is indistinguishable from it. It does not exist, in the reader's eyes, beyond the suffering it displays. Relating to the analysis – or to the simple reading – of a literary subject, it is therefore possible to realise that the definition of its identity lies in those same attributes that are expressed, directly or indirectly, into the poetic/literary space in which its *given form* appears. Rebora's lyrical Ego *is* – exist – in the space of a composition that fixes the margins of its own existence and manifests itself *within* them. Following this reasoning, the compositional limits of the literary work to which the Ego belongs constitute the area within which it defines itself and makes its attributes known.

A useful example of deepening of this concept is constituted by the figures of archaic Greek literature. Over the centuries, the literary reverberation of the protagonists of epic and mythical narratives has reached enormous proportions. Think of the infinity of existences known by a figure like that of Ulysses, who rises in the *status* of archetypal representation of the human being existence. From the Homeric narrative onwards, Ulysses' Ego existed in a myriad of literary spaces, constituting itself in a myriad of distinct identities as distinct entities. The deepness

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[17] Original text: "Uno di tre grandi generi teorici in cui la letteratura si divide, quello che accorpa i testi dove un io espone, in uno stile molto lontano dal grado zero della prosa, dei contenuti fortemente soggettivi: passioni, stati d'animo, riflessioni personali."

of thought of the Odysseus 'alter ego' Leopold Bloom, for example, defines his Ego in an identity ontologically – as well as phenomenologically – different from that of the Ulysses of the Twenty-sixth *Canto* of Dante's *Inferno*. In placing the two Ulysses in relation as different forms of a single identity root, it is clear how much the commonality of the original literary Ego has little impact on the essence-of-entity of the subsequent ones. Bloom's Ego exists in fact as an entity despite the Homeric. Its attributes – its *given form* – are presented by Joyce in a specific literary space, a space within which it exists and which, as a literary Ego, does not transcend. Alike, the definition of the essence of entity of Dante's Ulysses takes shape in the literary space of the *Inferno's* verses.

The paradox of the *Don Quixote* composed by Pierre Menard makes the question even clearer. In the narration *Pierre Menard, author of Quijote*, Jorge Louis Borges presents the fantastic case of a man of letters who does not re-write the story of the errant knight of La Mancha, but who actually writes it, performing an act phenomenologically distinct from that of the original narration. His *Don Quixote*, although identical to the seventeenth century version, is not a copy of it nor can it be considered an alternative narrative of the same subject.

> [Pierre Menard] No quería componer otro *Quijote* -lo cual es fácil- sino «el» *Quijote*. Inútil agregar que no encaró nunca una transcripción mecánica del original; no se proponía copiarlo. Su admirable ambición era producir unas páginas que coincidieran -palabra por palabra y línea por línea- con las de Miguel de Cervantes.[18] (Borges 2001: 22)

The absolute coincidence of Menard's writing with that of Cervantes has no incidence on the fact that the two Don Quixotes maintain two ontologically distinct identities. Menard's literary work, according to Lisa Orlando's reading for «minima&moralia», "is not, nor will it ever be a simple copy of the original [...] but a duplicating production (or recreation) in which we can glimpse that dizzying mirage of which Blanchot spoke, of the infinite possibilities of a specific real world" (Orlando, Internet). The ontological specificity of Menard's Don Quixote Ego is therefore inextricably linked to the specificity of a "real world", an existential dimension within which the literary subject finds its presence and its ontological specificities – its own *given form*. In the case of Rebora's *Lyric Fragment*, its own suffering.

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[18] Translation by Andrew Hurley: "Pierre Menard did not want to compose *another* Quixote, which surely is easy enough – he wanted to compose *the* Quixote. Nor, surely, need one be obliged to note that his goal was never a mechanical transcription of the original; he had no intention of *copying* it. His admirable ambition was to produce a number of pages which coincided – word for word and line for line – with those of Miguel de Cervantes" (1999: 91).

5. The relational dynamics

The empirical singularity of the literary Ego-entity finds therefore in the reality of the work the space of its existence, of its *given form*. In a passage from *Lo spazio letterario*, Maurice Blanchot explores a matter relating to the implications of the relationship – the reading – which is established between the literary spatial reality and the "reality of the reader" (1967: 191). According to the philosopher, it is precisely in the context of the reader's reality that the element that most shapes the relationship between the two realities resides. The reader is in fact typical of a certain rigidity in approaching the relationship that would imply, among other things, his "change". This rigidity of the reader is caused by a concrete claim to "remain oneself towards what he reads", which persists despite the fact the link that connects his reality to that of the literary work is a properly *dialectical* connection. In Blanchot's thought it is possible to read an echo of Michelstaedter's phenomenological principle relating to the being of each *res* constantly "in relation to a conscience" (1982: 45) – quoted in the first paragraph about the empirical essence of the literary subject. Reversing the perspective of the principle, it is clear that if the literary subject is always the object of a consciousness as *res*, an object-in-itself, the same happens for the reading-subject. In the relationship with the reality of the literary subject, the reader is likewise subject and object: reading-subject and receiving object of what is literary entity. Blanchot:

> Reading therefore doesn't mean entering in communication with the literary work, it means «doing» so that the literary work communicates itself and, by using a deceptive image, it means being one of the two poles between which the illuminating violence of communication spring by mutual attraction and repulsion, in which this event is determined and which it constitutes with its own passage.[19] (1967: 172)

Into reading, the reading-subject therefore constitutes one of two poles of a dynamic connection.[20] The way in which this dynamic take place is that of manifestation,

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[19] Original text: "Leggere non vuole dunque dire entrare in comunicazione con l'opera, vuol dire «fare» in modo che l'opera si comunichi e, usando una immagine ingannevole, vuol dire essere uno dei due poli fra cui scaturisce, per reciproca attrazione e repulsione, la violenza illuminante della comunicazione, fra cui si determina questo avvenimento e che esso costituisce con il suo stesso passaggio".

[20] In the context of the critical debate of the second half of the twentieth century, the point finds an extremely significant articulation in the work of Georges Poulet. Muzzioli writes about his critical perspective: "If the essence of the work is the subjective consciousness that manifests itself in it, then the «critical consciousness» must lend itself to hosting this consciousness of others. «The work of art lives in me. In a certain sense, it thinks itself, even means itself in me»: the act of reading consists,

"illuminating violence" in which the literary *res* communicates itself. This "event" consists in the literary reality itself. It 'happens' into the "passage" (Blanchot 1967: 172) which is the relationship with the reader. Adopting Blanchot's perspective therefore entails a consideration of the essence of the literary Ego as *dynamic*, insofar as it is included ontologically and phenomenologically in a space – that of literary reality – which exists in the movement – in the "passage" – of the relationship with the reader.

The relationship between literary subject and reading-subject is therefore articulated in the meeting of two ontologically distinct realities. At this point, it is useful to go back to underlining a fact: the phenomenological essence of the literary Ego – as has been observed – stands as *res* distinct from both the reading- and the writing-subject. Its essence[21] is in fact reflected in its positioning as pole within the relational-dialectical dynamic, just like the reading subject. In other words, in its position as an active element towards the existential reality of the reading-subject. If we proceed to consider that interaction of reading, it appears as the result of a possibility proper *a priori* to the two subjects. The literary subject 'has' in fact in itself the relational possibility, which constitutes an attribute that defines it ontologically: due to this, the literary subject can be read and can interact with the reading-subject. Regarding this point, I quote a passage from *La poetica dello spazio* in which Gaston Bachelard – in the context of a philosophical discourse on the links between the written poetic image and the writing-subject – writes ...

> in its activity, the poetic image has its own essence, its own dynamism, it depends on a *direct ontology* [...]. Very often, precisely in a direction opposite to that of causality, in the *retentissement*[22] studied with such finesse by Minkowski (2005), we seem to be able to find the true measures of the essence of a poetic image. In this *retentissement*, the poetic image will acquire an essence resonance. The poet speaks from the edges of being and, therefore, to determine the essence of an

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for Poulet, in giving way to another being, in order to understand him intuitively". (Muzzioli 2005: 175).

Original text: "Se l'essenza dell'opera è la coscienza soggettiva che si manifesta in essa, allora la «coscienza critica» deve prestarsi a ospitare questa coscienza altrui. «L'opera vive in me. In un certo senso, essa si pensa, addirittura si significa in me»: l'atto della lettura consiste, per Poulet, nel cedere il posto a un altro essere, per poterlo comprendere intuitivamente".

[21] The term refers to its being substantially a phenomenological entity.

[22] Translation of the note from the Italian edition: "We prefer to leave to French *retentissement* the suggestive empathic-identification load that the word intrinsically possesses. An Italian equivalent (which, in any case, could not synthetically express the complex process present in the French *retentissement*) would easily run the risk of concealing, in part or in whole, its phenomenological load (on the other hand, ambiguous)".

image, we will need to experience *retentissement*, per the style of Minkowski's phenomenology.[23] (2006: 6)

Through referring to Eugène Minkowski's theory of the phenomenological essence of the poetic image, Bachelard underlines the manifestational and dynamic character of it. The ontology of the poetic image – which is poetic *res* – is specifically defined by its interactions with the reading-subject, and absolutely separate from the ontology of the writing-subject (2006: 7). The poet is therefore on "the edges of being". It is precisely in his compositional act of the poetic image that the ontological separation takes shape. Insisting on the inter-active and dialectical character of the relationship between the existential literary dimension and that of the reading-subject, Bachelard also records that, in the context of the phenomenological research on the poetic object, it is necessary to overcome the emotional tangencies[24] that it inspires *in* the reading-subject and regain a consideration of its pure essence of *res*.

> The multiplicity of resonances then arises from the unity of being in *retentissement*. Put in simpler words, we come across an impression well known by all readers passionate about poetry: poetry completely takes hold of us, and this process of capture of being by poetry has a phenomenological character that cannot mislead. (2006: 12)

Admitting the essence of 'phenomenological entity' relative to the literary subject and contextualising it within the context of the relational dynamic with the reading-subject, therefore entails recognition of its possibility of dialectical incidence. Its ontological reality is distinct, particular, separated from that of the writing-subject, and becomes the 'mover' of emotional resonances in the reading-subject. As an entity, however, the literary subject does not consist of the reflection *per contralto* of those resonances, but of an phenomenological object itself. The concept that comes to be pointed out is however, in a certain sense, atavistic. The image of the separation between the existential singularity of the author and that of his poetic work is in fact an already Horatian figuration. In the last *Epistle* of the *First*

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[23] Original text: "nella sua attività, l'immagine poetica possiede una propria essenza, un proprio dinamismo, dipende da una *ontologia diretta* [...]. Molto spesso, proprio in una direzione contraria rispetto a quella della causalità, nel *retentissement* studiato con tanta finezza da Minkowski (2005), ci sembra di poter ritrovare le vere misure dell'essenza di un'immagine poetica. In tale *retentissement*, l'immagine poetica acquisterà una sonorità di essenza. Il poeta parla stando ai limiti dell'essere e, perciò, per determinare l'essenza di un'immagine, ci occorrerà avvertire il *retentissement,* secondo lo stile della fenomenologia di Minkowski.".

[24] Consider the difference established by Bachelard regarding the concepts of "emotional tangency" such as "resonance" and *retentissement*: "In resonance we hear the poem, in *retentissement* we speak it, it is ours" (2006: 12).

Book, Horace turns directly to his poetic creation: "fuge quo descendere gestis"[25] (2015: 111). As pointed out by Andrea Cucchiarelli, *separation* is in fact a central philosophical theme of Horatian poetry in the *Epistles* (2015: 9). Personification constitutes the extreme declination of a conceptual principle internally rooted in its verses: the existential singularity of the poet separates him from his own work, just as one biological life separates itself, one from another. Precisely in this *separation*, in conclusion, it is given to him to observe the character of irreversibility: "non erit emisso reditus tibi"[26] (2015: 111).

6. Conclusion

In conclusion of this discourse it is possible to fix some points the analysis of the philosophical and critical-literary materials under examination highlighted. Among these, the first is constituted by a character of phenomenological substantiality of the literary Ego, intelligible as 'object-of-a-consciousness' and therefore empirical *res*. This first observation allowed the hypothesis of critical analysis itself as a primarily phenomenological discourse. It was consequently intended to deepen the ontological dynamics relating to the literary subject as an entity, and it was possible to underline its essence of 'non-life-form' and its character of autonomy – per division – from the writing- and the reading-subject. The literary subject has therefore been analysed in its relations with the space of 'its' the literary work, which was identified as the margin of a concretely existential space. It has been underlined how the *given form* of the literary subject takes shape within it, and how the relational dynamic with the extratextual subject is established from the space of the literary work. The analysis of this dynamic and the highlighting of its properly dialectical and dynamic nature have constituted the last point of interest of the essay. What emerged is therefore summarised in a multiplicity of insights related to the empirical substance of the literary subject. Thus, the necessity of a more complete study of the issue becomes clear, given the profound interconnection found between the points highlighted by the discussion.

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[25] Translation by me: "Go ahead, where you crave to descend".

[26] Translation by me: "Once you leave, there is no return for you".

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Stefano Bottero

OSVRT NA TEORIJU I KRITIKU „KNJIŽEVNOG EGA". KOMPARATIVNA STUDIJA

Rezime

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