

The Role of Imagination in Provoking Critical Reflection and Transformative Learning through Art. An Example Taken from a Group of Teachers Training in Surrealist Poetry

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Abstract

This paper presents the views of 12 primary education teachers who participated in an educational workshop entitled: *'The difficulty in approaching surrealist poetry within the classroom and the transformation of the teachers' views through art. The role of imagination.'* The aim of the workshop was to harness the power of imagination in order to stimulate critical thinking and transform the teachers' dysfunctional views over teaching surrealist poetry at school. The method applied was the following: *'Transformative learning through an aesthetical experience'* by A. Kokkos (2010, 2011, et al., 2021). During the workshop poems by Milto Sahtouris from his collection *'Το σκεύος'* (The Utensil) were used. By applying this method, it was observed that the teachers – trainees via processing poetry and in particular interpreting words, symbolisms, surprises, reviewed their initial views regarding the difficulty of understanding and teaching surrealist poetry. Releasing their imagination, a skill significantly important to develop at least for specific purposes in transformative learning, enabled them to discover 'hidden' meanings within the words of the poem and in particular 'reading' the images that play a dominant role in surrealist poetry.

Key words: Teachers' training, critical reflection, transformative learning, imagination, surrealist poetry

1. Introduction

In an era characterized by rapid changes in social-economic-cultural structures, often affecting negatively children and adolescents, the school should respond to their new needs, providing space to teach fine arts with the aim of encouraging their imagination, creativity and critical thinking, essential skills to live in new environments. As stated in a UNESCO text, today we need a school with a balanced education between the positive sciences and the humanities, the arts and sports. In this context, the teaching material is not treated only as information to be transmitted, but as a recorded human experience and as a stimulus for aesthetic emotions. School does not only teach or train, it does not simply inform, but leads the student to a cognitive and emotional relationship with each subject taught (Unesco, 2002). In this direction, the role of teachers emerges as crucial, because teachers as 'facilitators' of learning (Rogers, 1999), need to lead young people to 'discover' knowledge and to acquire a critical attitude towards lifelong learning. However, for this to happen, teachers must be open to changes, ready to transform their own views and assumptions that make it difficult for them to understand the constantly evolving educational environment and to act within it. Changes, transformations are an element of the open professionalism of teachers, who must accept that they themselves must be lifelong, critically reflective learners (Brookfield, 1995). In this

context, this paper will present the reflections, the implementation process and the results of an educational activity, which aimed to use the imagination to provoke critical reflection and transform dysfunctional views of a group of primary school teachers, regarding the teaching of surrealism poetry at school.

2. Art, Critical Reflection, and Transformative Learning

The importance and methods of achieving critical reflection and transformative learning are central issues in adult education. It has been argued by many educators and researchers (Dewey, 1934 (1980); Freire, 1970; Perkins, 1994; Greene, 2000; Freire & Shor, 2011; Kokkos, 2010; Kokkos et al., 2011; Kokkos, 2021; Raikou, 2019) that the use of art in teaching, in addition to the aesthetic cultivation of learners, can promote critical reflection and transformative learning. Critical reflection is defined as the process in which the adult recognises, evaluates and revises opinions, assumptions and values, which they accepted uncritically during their childhood and adolescence, with the aim of replacing or repositioning them within the context of their adult life. (Brookfield, 2006b). According to Mezirow, the process of critical reflection, under certain conditions can lead to Transformative Learning. *“Transformative learning involves gaining awareness, through critical reflection, of specific preconceived assumptions on which a distorted or incomplete meaning view is based, followed by the transformation of that view through the reorganization of meaning. This is the most important kind of emancipatory learning”* (Mezirow, 2022, p. 119). Mezirow, also, raising the issue of evaluating the validity of the learning process linked to critical reflection, states: *‘The movement in the process of attribution of validity is dictated by the purpose or sequence of actions of the participant in a learning process and proceeds from the determination of a problem through critical reflection, empirical or consensual attribution of validity, and **imaginative insight** towards the creation of new interpretation’* (2022, p. 95), thus highlighting the importance of harnessing imaginative capacity in the process of transformative learning so that the individual can insightfully imagine themselves in the future, when they will have adopted new roles, new perspectives on their life.

In this direction, aesthetic experience, through critical analysis of the messages contained in the works of art, contributes to the transformation of beliefs and shapes the way in which we perceive ourselves and the world. As Dewey has written, the aesthetic experience we acquire through our contact with art is a challenge to think. And this is because when a reader ‘reads’ a work of art, they fully activate their imagination and reflective ability, in order to give meaning to the work they observe (Dewey, 1980). According to Perkins, the processing of works of art, *in addition to aesthetic enjoyment, also cultivates a critical and reflective mood, because a thinking attitude is required in order to discover what they have to show us and what they have to tell us* (Perkins, 1994, p. 3-4). Aesthetic experience thus contributes to activating and empowering us to think reflectively and critically and, in some cases, *unleashing our imagination leads to wide awakening and imaginative action* (Greene, 2000, p. 43).

3. The Role of Imagination in Provoking Critical Reflection and Transformative Learning through Art

The ability to imagine, i.e. the ability to envision the non-existent, the process of forming in our mind images, associations and ideas that go beyond empirical reality, has in principle a direct relationship with problem solving, with mathematics, with scientific thinking. The most impressive leaps in scientific thinking are achieved not so much by new observations as by processes, carried out in the imagination of scientists, with bold ideas, courageous assumptions and radical speculations. Bernard Shaw expresses this truth in a single sentence: *Imagination is the starting point of creation* (Sho in Trivizas, 2010). Trivizas, also referring to Thomas Edison, who had argued that to invent you need nothing more than imagination and a pile of garbage, wrote: *Scientific progress is nothing but applied imagination* (Trivizas, 2010).

Imagination is a constitutive element of learning for Dewey (1980) and the key means to mobilize it is aesthetic experience. The source of imagination for Dewey lies in childhood, where children tell imaginary stories, stories with internal coherence at any level: from the most relaxed to the most rigorous. These imaginative constructions prepare the way to a more rigorously coherent thought and show that 'if we want to teach people to think, we must first teach them to invent, using their imagination' (Rodari, 1985, p. 218).

The book '*The Imaginary*' Novalis Publications, written in 1912, was the driving force that led Gianni Rodari (1985) to write his own widely read book '*The Grammar of Imagination*', recognizing the importance of educating children in writing fictional stories, with the aim of developing their critical and creative thinking. Unfortunately, school curricula lead most children growing up to prematurely shut the door on their imagination.

In adult education the recognition of the importance of imaginative ability came mainly from the field of literature. Literature has enormous wealth and therefore sooner or later, we all feel the need to turn to it, to discover ourselves and others (Bloom, 2004; Sartre, 2008). University teachers teaching literature and aiming at emancipatory learning (Bloom, 2004; Greene, 2000; Jarvis, 2000, etc.) realized the power imagination has, which by permeating novels and poems, results in transformations of dysfunctional opinions, stereotypes, etc. to students and adults in general.

Imagination gives life to our experience, Warnock argues, and so *one of the primary purposes of education is to remove the opportunity for people to hurt, or to give in to a sense of futility or the belief that they have reached the end of their lives. of things worth acquiring* (1978, p. 203). As Greene states, *the use of imagination enables us to escape from what is permanent and final, objective and always real. Imagination helps us see beyond what we call normal, or the result of common sense, and carve out new levels of experience. In this way we can disengage, so that we manage to see, even fleetingly, how things could be, form a perception of how they should be, but also what has not yet been achieved, while remaining, at the same time, in contact with what they possibly are* (2000, p. 19). In the realization of this reflection, which includes the imaginary image of a future change, it is indeed possible for the individual, reflecting critically on their disorienting dilemmas, to see dysfunctional situations differently, to see themselves change, while transforming previous views and assumptions

A recognized means of developing imagination and cultivating critical reflection is the processing of works of art, as art uniquely frees our imagination, resulting in the ability to see the world from many different perspectives. Achieving these goals presupposes the design of appropriate activities, particularly in the field of literature, that will make good use of the emancipatory power of texts (Greene, 2000). Appropriate preparation of the activities is very important also since *trainees participate in an educational experience with different levels of readiness for transformative learning, which the trainer should take into account, as well as their semantic considerations linked to their assumptions* (Mezirow, 1991/2022, p. 232-233).

4. Imagination, Surrealist Poetry, and Critical Reflection

Surrealist poetry is considered amongst the kinds of art privileged for the exploitation of imagination, with the aim of achieving critical reflection and transformative learning. Usually, teaching literature in school, especially poetry, is done in a formalistic way. It is usually 'compulsory school knowledge', associated with stereotypically analysing lyrics and memorizing unrelated poems, short texts, linguistic idioms and always the biographies of poets and writers. Even symbols have a fixed interpretation. Emphasis is put on correct reading and analysis. Too little attention is paid to helping students mediate between assigned narratives and the realities of their own lives (Creene, 1990, 2000).

However, when teachers are aware of new approaches to literature (Iser, 1980) and use in teaching art forms that promote imagination, critical reflection, creativity, then it is possible that the plot, themes, character development, their symbolisms to connect with the lives of the learners and lead them to critical awareness (Freire, 1970). The works of surrealist artists are considered to belong to these art forms because they place Man at their centre. Surrealism considers that man should not be trapped in the reality of everyday life, but to use the imagination, the dream and the unconscious to abolish the shackles of logic, which limit them and do not let them evolve. To achieve these goals surrealist poets use automatic writing, reinforced by Freud's psychoanalytic theory of dreams, thus giving primacy to the unconscious. In surrealism the imagination is omnipotent, Elytis writes and argues that surrealism changed our perception of poetry, affected the quality of our sensitivity and the receptivity of our emotion, approached the authentic sources of existence.... felt the inspiration (Elytis, 1982). According to Empirikos, surrealist poetry creates a new world, endless, immeasurable, enchanting, in which images also play a dominant role (in Giatromanolakis, 1983, p. 20). For me, Breton states, the most powerful image is the one that presents the highest degree of arbitrariness....the one that takes the longest time to translate into practical language (Breton, 1972). The images, the dreams, the automatic writing of surrealism are tools that mobilize the imagination more than any other art form. Another interesting element, in which we could connect surrealist poetry with the theory of transformative learning is the element of **transformation**, which we find very often in these works. A sensitive and difficult to define point in poetry, which brings the imagination back to its source, mainly through automatic writing (Giatromanolakis, 1983), but also could sometimes be seen as a transformation of the subjects. The source refers to the childhood of individuals and it is very interesting that in recent years many adults read children's fantasy books, especially the books of the Harry Potter series. This is perhaps because people live in

a world that moves very fast and to interpret it, they look for a quick retreat to the world of fantasy, to a world that is connected to their childhood (Polyakov, 2005). The educational power of imagination, therefore, lies in the fact that people by freeing their thinking can be led to critical reflection and transformative learning through appropriately organized activities.

5. The Workshop on the Topic: 'The Difficulty of Accessing Surrealist Poetry in the Classroom and the Transformation of Teachers' Viewpoints Through Art'

In the context of the above consideration, this work will present the viewpoints of a group of twelve primary school teachers, who participated in a workshop, on the topic: **'The difficulty of accessing surrealist poetry in the classroom and the transformation of teachers' viewpoints through art.'** The aim of the workshop was to harness imagination to provoke critical reflection and transform teachers' dysfunctional views on teaching Surrealist poetry in school. It is important that the topic of the workshop was chosen by the teachers themselves, after they had expressed their difficulty in teaching this type of poetry in the classroom. What contributed to this difficulty was their dysfunctional views of Surrealist poetry, which they considered difficult to access and meaningless since their own school years. The method applied was the following: **'Transformative learning through aesthetic experience'** (TLAE) by A. Kokkos (2010, 2011). At the workshop we made use of poetry by Miltos Shaktouris and especially the poem *'The Poet's Head'*, from his poetry collection *'The Utensil'*, 1971.

6. The Method 'Transformative Learning through Aesthetic Experience'

The method implemented at the workshop was the TLAE method, a method that aims, by utilizing important works of art, to promote critical reflection on opinions, perceptions, attitudes, as well as their transformation, when they are stereotyped or dysfunctional regarding the researched topic. The method consists of six stages, which are the following:

- **Identifying the need for trainees to critically investigate a topic.**
- **Expression of the trainees' opinions on the subject.**
- **Defining the sub-topics** to be examined (sub-topics are chosen, because there is hardly enough time in one training course to examine a topic in its entirety) and defining the **critical question(s)** on the sub-topics.
- **Choosing works of art and their correlation with the critical question(s).** The selection criteria of the works have been set by the method, in the context of which the criteria of the theorists of the Frankfurt School have been accepted (Adorno, 2000, etc.). The criteria refer to the aesthetic value of the works, their unconventional character, their ability to provoke critical reflection, to be open to multiple interpretations and not predictable, to interest the trainees, etc.
- **The processing of works of art** is implemented using the four-phase method of David Perkins (1994), as proposed in his book: **'The Intelligent Eye. Learning to think by Looking at Art'**. In each phase, specific questions are asked, aimed at in-depth observation of a work of art, with the aim of provoking critical thinking. The four phases are the following:

- ✓ *First, simple observation of the work of art.*
- ✓ *Open, adventurous observation of the work of art.*
- ✓ *Detailed and in-depth observation of the work of art.*
- ✓ *Holistic observation of the work of art and reflection.*
- **Critical reflection based on the trainees' initial assumptions.**

In his most recent book, A. Kokkos (2021) has added a **seventh stage**, which is the definition and implementation of the next steps that learners can follow, after the implementation of an educational transformational action.

7. Implementation of the Method and Presentation of the Trainees' Viewpoints

7.1 1st Stage. Identifying the Need for Learners to Critically Investigate a Topic

Initially, the members of the group were introduced, followed by a brief presentation of the theoretical framework and the goals of the educational activity. The trainees themselves expressed the need to investigate the issue of the access of surrealist poetry to the classroom - and not only - in the context of a previous educational activity, regarding the teaching of the Language course in Primary School, as well as the desire to process it with this particular method.

7.2 2nd Stage. Expression of the Trainees' Viewpoints on the Subject

At this stage the trainees, divided into three groups of four, discussed and wrote down their viewpoints, answering the question: ***'Is surrealist poetry easy or difficult to access? What is your opinion?'***

The first group focused on the fact that there is a difficulty for both students and trainees to understand surrealist poetry: *'The use of automatic writing in the production of texts/poems, with incomprehensible meanings many times makes children laugh, mock and even brings us in a very difficult position, because we can't easily delve into them either...'*

The second group emphasized the role of the Poet in modern society: *'The Poet as an intellectual must be simple, understood by many people, if he or she wishes to have an intellectual role in society. Surrealist poets seem like they want to write for themselves and for the company around them, they are not interested in society... We wonder what the role of the Poet should be in modern society...'*

The third group wrote down: *'We discussed in the group the difficulty of understanding surrealist poetry. We are used to reading something and explaining it with logic. This is how the school has trained us and this is how we teach our students. We find this right because in this way we all understand the same, we form the same meanings. We understand, however, that this is not how we make use of our imagination or our experiences in order to become creative in the classroom. We are curious about this training; we want to open up to new things...'*

7.3 3rd Stage. Identifying Subtopics and Critical Questions

After processing the answers of the groups, it was found that mainly two subthemes emerged, which are 'translated' into two critical questions:

- ✓ *The difficulty of accessibility in the teaching of surrealist poetry.*
- ✓ *The role of the poet in modern society.*

The critical questions expressed were the following:

- ✓ *Is it possible to transform our attitude towards surrealist poetry, through the mobilization of our imagination and critical reflection?*
- ✓ *What is the role of the Poet in modern society?*

7.4 4th Stage. The Selection of Works of Art and their Correlation with the Critical Question(s)

In the fourth stage, the instructor proposed two projects for processing and a third one was proposed by a team member.

- ✚ The first work was the painting '*The Poet's Eye*' by Robert Motherwell (1989).

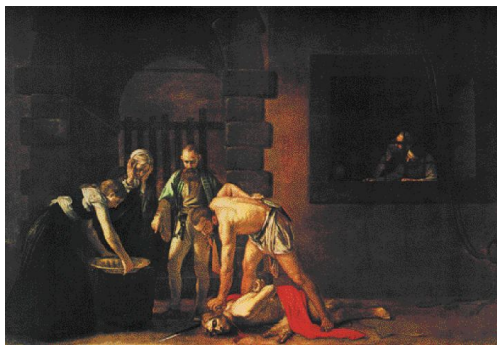


- ✚ The second work was the poem '*The Poet's head*', by Miltos Sachtouris, from the poetry collection *The Utensil*, 1971.

The Poet's head

I cut off my head
put it on a plate
and took it to my doctor
There's nothing wrong with it, he told me
it's simply incandescent
throw it into the river and we shall see
I threw it into the river with the frogs
It was then it set all bedlam loose
It began to sing some strange songs
to grate dreadfully and to howl
I took it and wore it again on my neck
I roamed the streets in rage
with the green hexagonometric head of a poet
[Translated by Kimon Friar]

- ✚ The third work was Caravaggio's painting '*The beheading of Saint John the Baptist*', (1608).



All three works were equally linked to the two critical questions. From the three given works, the group decided to process the poem *'The Poet's head'* by M. Shachtouris.

7.5 5th Stage

In the fifth stage of the method relating to the poem processing, Perkins four-phase model (1994) was applied, as mentioned above.

7.5.1 First Phase

In the first phase, the trainer asked the group members if they knew the poem and the Poet. Also, if they had used it in class to teach. Four of them knew about the Poet and had read the poem. The rest eight did not know neither the poem nor the Poet. No one had ever used it in class or analysed it. The poem was then read aloud once, and four more minutes were given for silent, individual reading. After that, the first question was asked: ***What are your first thoughts about the poem? What is your first impression?*** Their answers (indicative), presented in the table, were the following:

- ✓ *The poem is unique, eccentric, unusual, it was difficult to understand.*
- ✓ *The first reading was confusing, what does the poet mean? It is macabre!*
- ✓ *The poem expresses so much anguish and pain, there is no perspective.*
- ✓ *The poem is difficult and enigmatic. At first glance it doesn't seem to lead us anywhere.*
- ✓ *The many enigmatic expressions that exist in the poem, such as: 'on a plate I put my head', 'frogs', 'green hexagonal head' seem incomprehensible to me, but they also create the need to search for their interpretation.*
- ✓ *The poem has strong images, resonant words, it seems to be inventive, yet if people cannot understand it what is its purpose?*

Immediately after, the second question of the first phase was asked: ***What do you wonder and what would you like to explore further in the poem?***

- ✓ *What I would like to know is why the Poet separates the head from the rest of the body.*
- ✓ *What interpretation is there for the green hexagonal head of the Poet? What do frogs represent?*
- ✓ *The river, the frogs, the hexagonal head are words that certainly imply something in relation to society and the time when the poem was written, but what exactly is that?*

- ✓ *I would like to know what the river with the frogs symbolises.*
- ✓ *Does the green hexagonal head differentiate the Poet from other people, the society as a whole or does it bring them together? Does eventually the Poet stand apart from society?*
- ✓ *Is the Poet's pain reflected in the poem related to his own dead ends or to the role imposed on him by society? Why should a poet suffer so much?*
- ✓ *I want to learn about the Poet. For instance, at which point of his life and poetic creativity did he write this poem? He seems like an alien.*
- ✓ *I would like to know the conditions that led the Poet write this poem, his own interpretation. I would like to learn of his personal experiences, his aspirations, what he meant to say.*
- ✓ *Who is the Poet addressing to, why does he feel that way? Could the transition to the new head be positive, optimistic?*

The questions were too many and stormy. The poem provoked the students' thinking and this shows that the choice was successful. However, we found that most of the answers to the questions are related to 'what does the Poet-creator of the poem mean?', in which historical and social context he wrote it, what are his personal experiences, etc. In other words, the trainees refer more to traditional methods of analyzing a poem and much less to modern methods, which emphasize the subjective experiences and perceptiveness of the readers. After the brief, non-judgmental recap of what was said, we moved on to the second phase.

7.5.2 Second Phase

In the second phase of the open, adventurous approach of the poem, the trainer asks the group members to remember what was said initially about the importance of critical reflection, but also the mobilization of the **imagination**, especially in surrealist works of art. The trainer also points out the importance of "letting themselves into the poem", thinking about how it "speaks" to them, what experiences it activates and to distance themselves from the Poet's intentions. They are asked to let their imagination run free. In this context, they are given time (15 minutes) to read the poem again, to try to go deeper into the poem and to record the thoughts-interpretations, which they give to the paradoxical, unreal elements present in the poem, to the surprises, to the symbols.

- **Their answers (indicatively), written on the board are the following:**
- ✓ *My imagination leads me to an incandescent image, to a conflagration, all burning to be reborn.*
- ✓ *The poem is full of surprises and symbolism and only with imagination can you approach them. Green probably symbolizes hope, so it's not all doom and gloom*
- ✓ *Might the hexagonal head refer to an open mindedness because of the obtuse angles? But I want to hear from others too. ...*

- ✓ *I close my eyes and imagine horrible things... a severed head distancing itself from society and a headless body, moving through it as if we live in a society without a "head", without a guide....*
- ✓ *I imagine the beheading of the Poet, it reminds me of the beheading of John from Oscar Wilde's Salome. I think when he puts his head back on his neck has it changed? At least he has been freed from what torments him.*
- ✓ *I imagine a river full of frogs, which transform into princes! I want a fairy tale; I can't stand so much pain and agony. Is it so difficult for a poet to join society?*
- ✓ *Such a small poem and yet so many unreal elements, which really stir my imagination. I imagine a river full of frogs. Frogs have always been disgusting to me and rightfully so!! Because here they must symbolize public opinion, the mainstream, from which I always wanted to stand out...*
- ✓ *I wonder does a Poet have to suffer so much? Does he suffer for us or for him? Does he expect anything from us? Should we change to be transformed?*

The responses of the trainees in the second, adventurous phase reveal that they mobilized their imaginations to approach the poem more freely. The words of the poem are few, but the images created in the minds of the trainees with their opening to imagination were many and powerful (Tsatsoulis, 2000). All the unrealistic - extralogical elements of the poem are mentioned and used in the interpretations of the trainees. Interpretations are given on the meanings of the poet's severed hexagonal head, the frogs, the strange songs and focus on the role of the Poet in modern society.

7.5.3 Third Phase

In the third phase of the in-depth observation of the project, the trainer presented the Poet Miltos Sachtouris, as a surrealist poet, who made great use of imagination in his poetry (unreal, extralogical elements: mythical monsters, flying beings, etc.), catalyzing the borders between the imaginary and the real world and attempting to overturn conventional order of things.



Miltos Sachtouris (1919-2005) is the poet who argued that poetry is a continuous autobiography, "like a kind of subconscious life diary...". After burning his law books, he devoted his life to poetry. In an interview he says: "After my mother died, I began to strip myself inside and out of many things. Little by little my sight became more penetrating and my hearing sharper, so that I now see and hear better what was being revealed to me behind the face things". All his poetry is a contemplation and reflection on the meaning of human existence. Miltos Sachtouris recognizes that "poetry is a

bloody business". When I started writing, he says, I didn't feel like I was addressing an audience. I had the feeling that from now on I was addressing my difficult fate. M. Sakhtouris wrote many poetry collections, was honored with three major state awards and many other distinctions for his poetic work (Sakhtouris, 2000).

After the presentation of the surrealist poet and elements of the poem, the trainees were asked to silently read the poem once more and express what continued to surprise them or additional interpretations, to talk about their feelings and if they think that the poem conveys a message. The message was expressed collectively by the group, writing and rewriting opinions on the board, until they reached a final agreed wording.

Indicative answers

- ✓ *The hexagonal head continues to amaze me. I think such a head has 12 eyes. It is the fantastic, i.e. the transcendence of the self... To see the invisible, to imagine what is not acknowledged and what needs to be changed, to be done differently...*
- ✓ *I think that the hexagonal head has many angles, that is, it refers to many points of view... Is this a message for us too? So, should we listen more? To broaden our horizons?*
- ✓ *The poem is very provocative... from the negative to the positive and vice versa, it keeps you on your toes...*

Expression of feelings

- ✓ *My first feelings were not pleasant at all. The anguish of the Poet penetrates us too. Optimism nowhere....*
- ✓ *I feel embarrassed, bewildered, but I also feel sympathy for the Poet.*
- ✓ *The poem leads me to psychoanalysis, I want revelation, I am surprised!*
- ✓ *My initial feeling was great fear because everything in society seems negative...Now I feel that there is also a small crack of hope.*
- ✓ *I feel tired from trying to understand the meaning of the poem.*
- ✓ *At first, I was anxious, anxious, worried.... Now I feel calm. I feel there is a way out.*
- ✓ *I, through reflection, felt satisfaction and joy, because I made sense of the poem, looking into my personal experiences.*

Central message

"Central message is man's competitive effort for self-determination, for taking responsibility for his personal choices, just as M. Sakhtouris took on the responsibility of being a POET for society. We all have to ask ourselves what society means to us and what we mean to society and act accordingly."

In the third phase, the students delve deeper into the exegetical elements of the poem, with their imaginative ability present. The six-cornered head acquires 12 eyes to express the many visual approaches to a subject, freedom of expression, active

listening, the call to all of us to open our horizons. Learners express their feelings, which have begun to change from the initial ones. Fear, anxiety, confusion, denial now leave even a small crack of hope for the future of society. Reflecting collectively, they agree on a common central theme, which is man's competitive effort for self-determination, for assuming individual responsibility for the social future, using as reference point the role of the Poet in society as an example.

7.5.4 Fourth Phase

In the fourth phase of the holistic observation of the project, the trainer asked the trainees divided into the same three groups they had initially formed, after reviewing the entire previous process and reflecting critically, to answer in writing about what their current approach to the poem was. The groups drafted the following texts:

1st group: *After processing the poem, our group considers that the key point for approaching the poem is the hexagonal head of the Poet, which is inflamed by big ideas, problems, personal and social upheavals. There is a spiritual anguish in the poem, a lot of ideas... The frogs in the river are common sense, the flow. In contrast to this, the Poet distances himself from society, hence the severed head. He is left alone and tormented by the existential issues of all of us, trying to provide answers to them.*

2nd group: *The Poet in an existential crisis, redefines his role, feels different, so he cuts off his head, throws it into the river and thus isolates himself from others. The river is the mass, the social whole. The doctor is his microcosm, in which he seeks redemption. But he doesn't find it and that's why he goes out on the streets in a rage. But what does the green hex head mean? The Poet combines the green of hope with the hexagonal shape, which for us signifies the transformation of views, something the poet asks of us. So hope exists in transformation, in changing, in coming close to the Poet. There is still timelessness in the poem, which concerns every thinking person, who is treated differently by others.*

3rd group: *We, as a group, felt what it means not to be accepted by society, how tragic it can be. The head symbolizes the reflection, which the Poet does for society, while the doctor is logic. They don't understand the Poet. The change happens when he puts his head in the water. The river symbolizes purification, but he does not achieve it and the search continues, it is permanent, so is his disharmony with society. The hexagonal means the alien, the exogenous, the transformation of the Poet through pain. The river is purgatory. Frogs clear the social atmosphere. The sanitization of society is done through the pain of the Poet, who has to cut off a part of himself to contribute to change.*

The texts drafted by the groups reveal that the trainees, despite their initial reservations, and by making a good use of the method, but also releasing their imagination were not afraid to get involved in surrealist poetry which they initially considered unapproachable.

6th Stage. Critical Reflection

In the sixth stage the trainees - in the same groups - answered again in writing to the initial critical questions. ***-Is it possible to transform our attitude towards surrealist poetry, through the mobilization of our imagination and critical reflection? - What is the role of the Poet in modern society?*** Our goal was the development of the students'

critical reflection throughout the learning process and the detection by them of changes in their initial views in a transformative direction, but also recognition of the role of imagination in the elaboration of the poem. The written texts of the groups wrote are the following:

1st team: *Editing in our team helped us a lot. We started completely negatively. Our initial view was that surrealist poetry is incomprehensible and poets belonging to this genre function as an intellectual elite. We've revised our thoughts on what surrealist poetry is, which we've been avoiding until now. Of course, to understand it you have to mobilize your imagination, which we have forgotten. But we thought that if we read such poems to our students, they will make a better analysis and help us to discover the messages! Fortunately, children still have imaginations! We also liked the approach of the Poet, who acts as an oscilloscope of society. The one who listens to the pulse of society and with his speech and eloquent impulsiveness, which at first alienates you, eventually acts as a stimulus to his contemporaries. He sacrifices himself for society as a whole.*

2nd group: *It was a nice transformational experience of ours. At first our view was: It's a stupid poem. Does not make sense. Man wants to enter another dimension, but what does that matter to the rest? But through the analysis method and with the help of all the team members we understood that the surrealists have important things to say, but they aim at our unconscious. It takes imagination and a lot of analysis to understand their writing style and the expressive means they use. Now we do not feel fear and anxiety, as in the beginning. We can express ourselves freely and say that in the poem the Poet is an uncompromising man, with strong emotions: Agony, loneliness, sadness, pain, despair. He takes the role of the savior of society as an autonomous personality. We also liked the whole process, teamwork, confronting different opinions, which however make you think even more.*

3rd group: *Through our experience we were gradually led to look deeper into the poem. We started from a superficial reading and discussion about the role of the Poet, continued with an analysis of social reality, extrapolated it for any person and society and ended up with our personal judgments. We have seen that when the poet takes the place of the thinker, the intellectual in society, then he really suffers and writes using strong words, absurd images etc., to express his own psyche, but also to shake us about the big existential issues. We were transformed as for the importance of working with our imagination, of letting ourselves go. We are also transformed emotionally: Empathy and understanding of the poet. But we also really enjoyed the method. We enjoyed the research, investigation, we enjoyed the method and felt satisfied that we came to a result by analyzing something that at first seemed incomprehensible to us!*

While studying the texts of the groups and comparing the initial views of the members of the groups with the final ones we found that the changes are clearly visible. They themselves refer to the revision of their views on the surrealist poetry that they had so far avoided, to the discovery of the deeper meanings of the poem, but also to the emotional transformation they experienced. They also referred to the joy of teamwork, even to the conflicts and confrontations they had in terms of interpretations, which are also components of the dialogue. They were also

transformed in the importance of working with their imagination, as they reported, setting themselves free.

8. Final Thoughts

The experience from the workshop showed that the use of art with the Transformative learning through aesthetic experience method gave the trainees the opportunity to think critically and reevaluate their assumptions about surrealist poetry. In all stages of the application of the method, the trainees participated with great interest, appreciating the importance of freeing the imagination in approaching this specific type of poetry. The view is confirmed that certain genres of literature and poetry, such as surrealism, offer more possibilities to imagine alternative solutions to our disorienting dilemmas, to reflect on alternative ways of life and moral choices (Greene, 2000). Art indeed gives us new lenses to reflect on our dysfunctional views and transform them in whole or in part.

The trainees revised their initial views on the difficulty of understanding surrealist poetry through the processing of the poem and in particular the interpretation of words, symbolism, surprises. In the discovery of hidden meanings in the lines of the poem and especially in the 'reading' of the images, which in surrealist poetry have a dominant role, they were helped by the liberation of their imagination, a skill whose cultivation seems to be very important, at least for some subjects in transformative learning.

The trainees also discussed the role of the Poet in society, as the role of an intellectual, who within society and not outside it, will motivate via their messages in the direction of positive actions and changes. Although they started from the position that the meaning in the text is given by the poet, that is, that the interpretation lies in what he himself wants to say, they moved quite a bit in the direction of giving their own interpretation of the role of the Poet, but also to talk about their own attitude towards the themes of the poem, such as taking personal responsibility for the sanitization and transformation of society. In reassessing the initial opinions on the specific subject, the functioning of the group played an important role, where the thinking of one mobilized the thinking of others, but also created a framework of safety for the free expression of its members.

In conclusion, the use of art for the development of critical reflection and transformative learning worked positively in this particular educational action. However, additional research is still needed, as well as several applications in each group of trainees introduced to this process, so that the transformations have permanence and constitute, at least for education, an important innovation, which will cause visible changes in the near future.

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